

#48

RAZORCAKE

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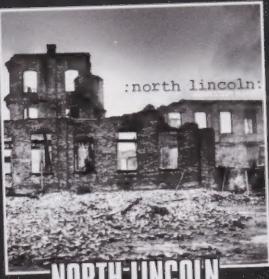


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GOD DAMN DOO WOP BAND
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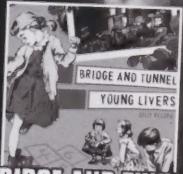


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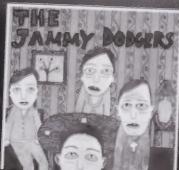
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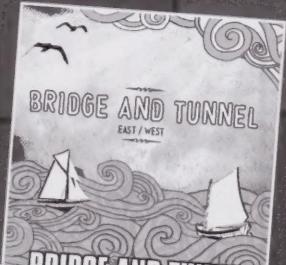
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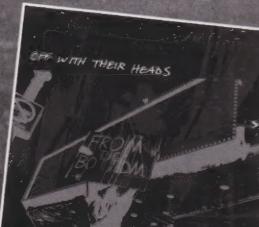
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Razorcake is a bona fide non-profit music magazine dedicated to supporting independent music culture. All donations, subscriptions, and orders directly from us—regardless of amount—have been large components to our continued survival.

Razorcake has been very fortunate. Why? By the mere fact that we still exist today. By the fact that we have over one hundred regular contributors—in addition to volunteers coming in every week day—at a time when our print media brethren are getting knocked down and out.

What you may not realize is that the fanciest part about Razorcake is the zine you're holding in your hands. We put everything we have into it. We pay attention to the pragmatic details that support our ideology. Our entire operations are run out of a 500 square foot basement. We don't outsource any labor we can do ourselves (we don't own a printing press or run the postal service). We're self-reliant and take great pains to cover a booming form of music that flourishes outside of the music industry, that isn't locked into a fair weather scene or subgenre.

So, here's to another year of gritted teeth, high fives, and staring at disbelief at a brand new record spinning on a turntable, improving our quality of life with each spin.

If you would like to give Razorcake some assistance beyond donations, we're looking for volunteers in the following areas: non-profit grant writer, non-profit fundraiser, non-douchey publicist (our 50th issue anniversary is coming up), FileMaker Pro wizard, PC network specialist, graphic designer (deep knowledge of InDesign required), and website coder (PHP-Nuke and Zen Cart). If you live in the L.A. area, we could always use a helping hand. Our door is open.

Contact us via www.razorcake.org if you'd like to help out.

Thank you.

—Todd Taylor

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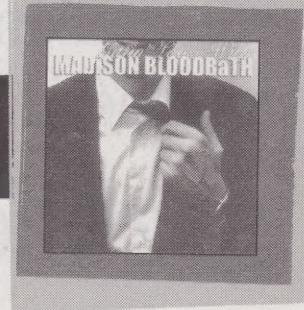
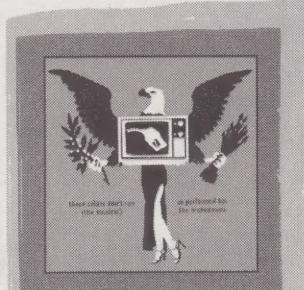
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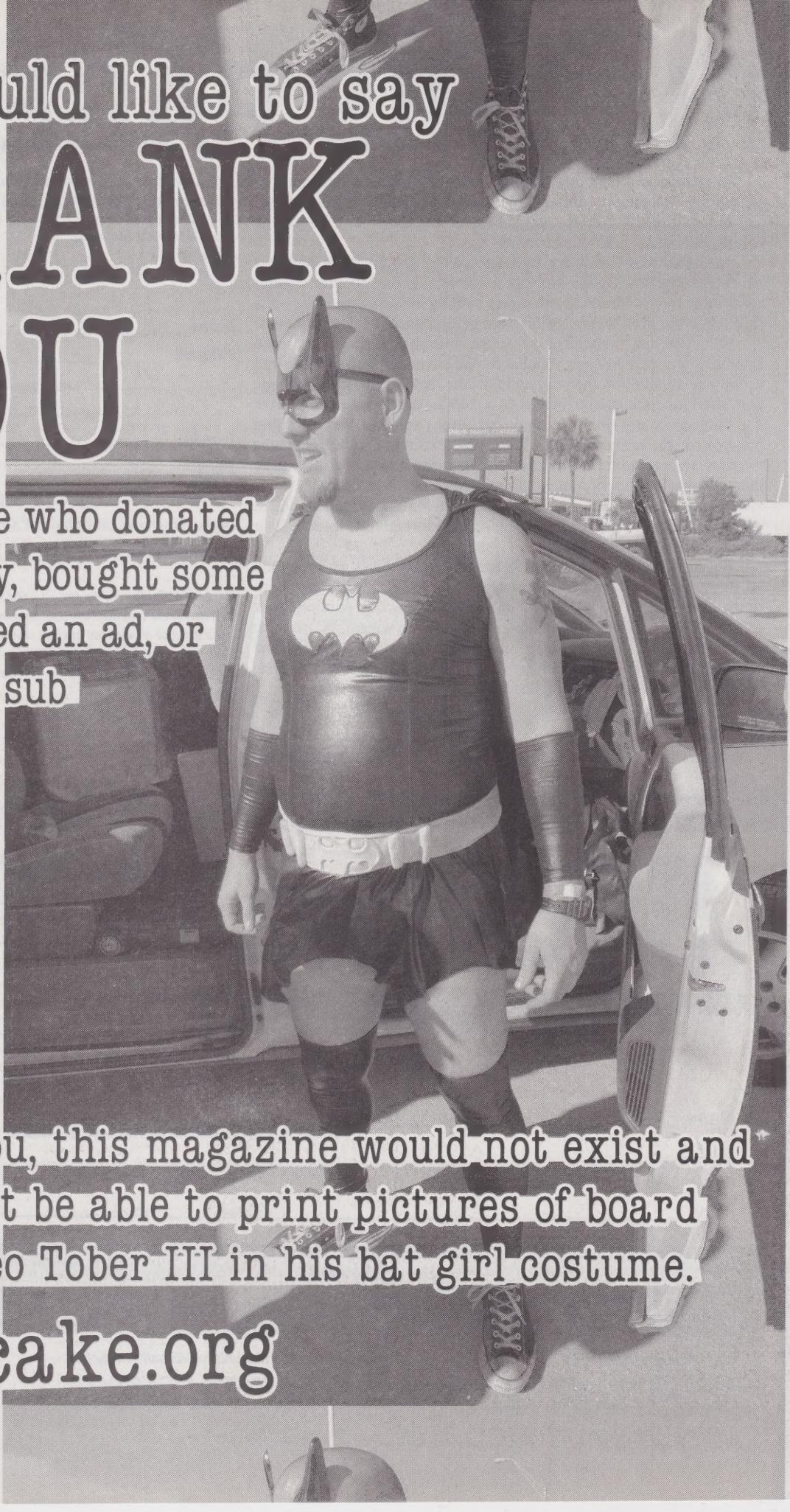


We would like to say
**THANK
YOU**

To everyone who donated
some money, bought some
distro, placed an ad, or
picked up a sub
this year.

Without you, this magazine would not exist and
we wouldn't be able to print pictures of board
member Leo Tober III in his bat girl costume.

razorcake.org



Fuck You, Dale

I'm a fan of doing stupid shit. Well-planned, long-term stupid shit. It keeps me amused. As many may know, I'm a big fan of the band Dillinger Four. Many years ago, when I was working at *Flipside*, Erik, one of D4's singers, said, "Todd, did you know that you guys have reviewed *Midwestern Songs of the Americas* at least once an issue for about a year and a half?" I smiled at him, not thinking that anyone had noticed. D4's label at the time, Hopeless, hadn't noticed and they had sent me a box of thirty CDs which I slowly released to our contributors (who didn't know they were part of a slow-drip recruitment drive for Dillinger Four).

Fast forward over a decade. Dillinger Four just released a great new record, *Civil War*. Due to a fundamental *Razorcake* policy of always seeking new bands to cover, we won't interview the same band twice, ever, even if they're a personal top five of all time. How else to celebrate this momentous occasion? I knew the record didn't blow. I was given access to it before its release to write the bio/one-sheet dealie for their current label, Fat.

I emailed Fat and asked for thirty full copies of *Civil War*. They respectfully declined, but did send some download cards. Due to *Razorcake* "officially" being members of the press and assuming we have more flexible terms with the law with propagating our ideas about music, I asked my friends over at Fat if I could burn some copies on our dime, give the copies to every active reviewer, and have the record reviewed as many times as possible. They basically said, "Sure, knock yourself out" and probably didn't give it another thought.

It's been abundantly clear in the last three months that computers want me dead. Not stabby-shooty-killy dead, but crazy-mania-don't-work-right-jump-in-front-of-bus-insane dead. And a small hiccup

was when we were duplicating the CDs for the reviewers, the song sequence got knocked out of whack on some—if not all—of the burns. Those who are familiar with D4 know that their albums are layered. I knew that the reviewers would need lyrics and the correct song order to write well-informed reviews, but I also knew this hair-brained scheme had a financial threshold of about ten dollars. So, instead of cajoling Vince and Adrian to re-burn forty-five CDs, and then photocopying the lyrics, I wrote a short explanation/apology to our reviewers. "Computers want to kill me. Dillinger Four is awesome. Songs out of order. Find lyrics on interweb. Want to run many simultaneous reviews. Don't mind if you don't like it. Intrepid leader, -Todd."

I've always been a fan of multiple reviews of a single piece of music in a zine. It shows that *Razorcake*'s not a bunch of folks using the same brain, we're not a clique, and that we don't consider ourselves a monolith that can make or break a band. We're a widely scattered bunch of people who happen to like music and DIY culture a whole lot. I think we're pretty good at what we do.

In the end, why did I do it? Because I could. Because independent publishing means we're free to take chances. Because I always want to take a small step back and celebrate the things that truly make me happy. Because I'm a geek who still can't get enough of great music that's being made all around us. So, if you're a band or label that turned in some music for review and it's not in this issue because we printed 7,000 words on *Civil War* instead, yeah, you're right. We're dumb. I admit it. (But we've been working a lot with our website, too, and there's a good chance it's posted on there.)

—Todd Taylor

AD DEADLINES

ISSUE #49

February 1st, 2009

ISSUE #50

March 1st, 2009

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Cover artwork by Horsebites
www.horsebitesdesign.com
Cover photo by Danny Bengston

The last two months have seen the loss of four souls who were important to *Razorcake*. This issue is dedicated to the memory of Ava Lillian Medina, Jamie Ewing, Studs Terkel, and Lefty. Rest in peace.

Contact *Razorcake* via our regularly updated website, www.razorcake.org or PO Box 42129, LA, CA 90042

"You owe your readers not your industry only but your judgment, and you betray instead of serve them if you sacrifice it to what may or may not be their opinion."

—Edmund Burke



Paddy Costello (right) discusses existential philosophy - how does a man without a head drink? - with the Arrivals' Little Dave (beardful); sparking a zesty conversation on Romanian agrarian chest hair and the optimal length of gold chains.

One man was later arrested.

THANK YOU: Cow skull, full moon, eyeball, cactus, mountains (without bandana'd coyote) thanks to Horsebites! for designing the cover and Danny Bengston for the cover photo (look closely). There's part of a penguin in there; Toby Tober for wearing the Bat Girl costume (adjacent page). When he got out of the restroom in rural Florida, a biker gang came roaring in. Luckily it was Halloween; Even in failure, there can be beauty thanks to Nation of Amanda for her illo. in Liz O's column; We totally scored the dude who did all the pictures on the No Idea website thanks to Jason Armadillo for his illo. in Jim's column; If we ever become a live action cartoon instead of a zine, I want Steve Larder to draw us all thanks for his illo. in Amy's column; Tubby tigers! Oh my! thanks to Brad Beshaw for his illo. in Sean's column; Well stocked toilet rolls thanks to Replay Dave for his photo of the Rhythm Chicken; Barry Ramone! thanks to Kiyoshi Nakazawa for his illo. in Dale's column; Im "peck"able drawing of the Famous Chicken señor Clem—some may say "egg"cellent; Probably the most salt we'll ever give to fuckin' Led Zeppelin thanks to Ryan Gelatin for his illo. in Nerb's column; I hope Gary takes a liking to Two and a Half Men thanks to Maynard for his illo. in Hornberger's column; Hat in hand thanks to Lauren Measure, Maddy Tight Pants, Kevin Morby, and Maggie Simpson for their contributions to Jamie Ewing's eulogy. Dammit, Jamie. Dammit; Blood on taffeta thanks to Joe Evans III, Kelly Lone, Amy K., and Albert Lam for all their help with the God Damn Doo Wop band interview; You just saved us from possible copyright infringement and kicked so much ass in the process thanks to Danny Martin for his illos. in the Otis Redding article; I'm never really going to tell you what to do, but, fuck, your life will be better if you went on a full-scale hunt for all of Shang-a-Lang's 7's thanks to Amy Adoyzie and Danny Bengston for their help in that interview; No, serious, late period Black Flag, but two dudes thanks to Matt Average and Donothedead for their words and photos in the It's Casual interview; Rollie Fingers jaunty, waxy curl of the 'stache thanks to Reyan Ali, Lauren Measure, and Ryan Russel for their contributions to the Horsebites! interview; Chris Baxter prevents us from looking totally shitty Photoshop high five. Thankee; As a recap—7,000 words dedicated to Civil War and that's not an apology—thanks to the following record review, book, DVD, and zine reviewers: Rene Navarro, Mike Frame, Bryan Static, Chris Peigler, Chris Walter, Adrian Salas, Jeff Proctor, Andrew Flanagan, Jennifer Federico, Vincent, CT Terry, Ty Stranglehold, Buttertooth, Joe Evans III, Kristen K., Art Ettinger, Corinne Smida, Jessica T., Kurt Morris, Dave Williams, Will Kwiatski, Nick Toerner, Mike Faloon, Donotfime, Sean Koepenick, Dave Dillon, Craven Rock, Josh Benke, Lauren Trout, Matt Average, Jimmy Alvarado, Reyan Ali, The Lord Kveldulf, Aphid Peewit, Sean Stewart, Noah Kaplan, and Megan Pants; All of these folks either came in to HQ, put up with my grumpiness, helped and/or prufed this issue: Jeff Proctor, Vincent, Jeremy Jones, Juan Espinosa, Jenny Moncayo, Adrian Salas, Lisa Weiss, Frenchy, and Mike Faloon.

I HATE POSUERS!



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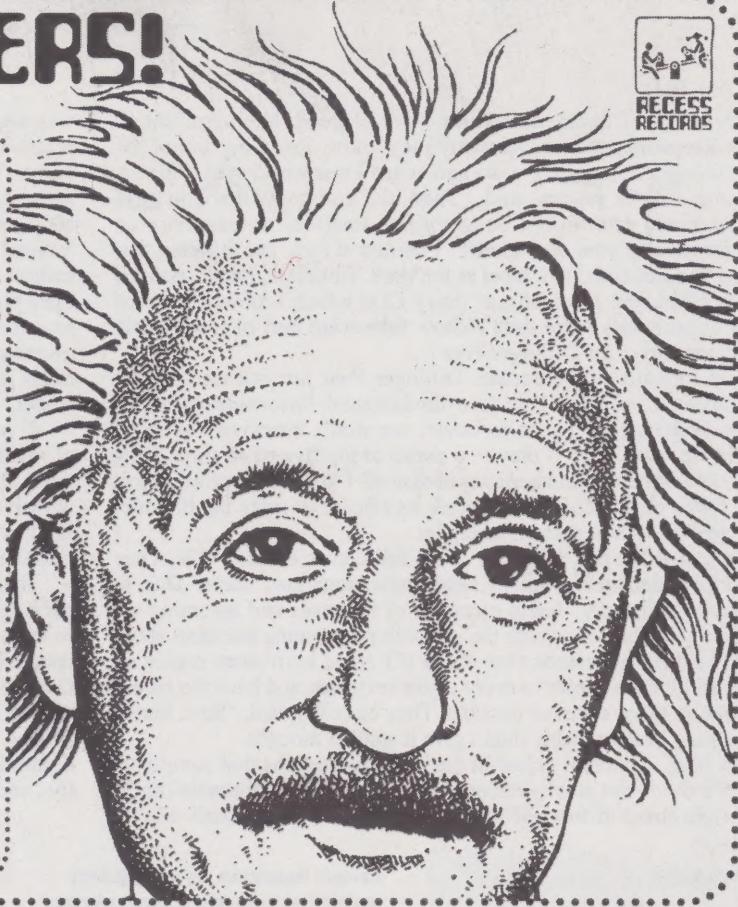
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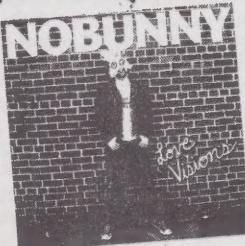
Magnanimous Collector/LA Times

"...if you've never been hugged by a horny, drunken Muppet, you should seek him out."

The Tucson Weekly

"Never in my life did I think I'd fall for a gutter-brained, cartoon swipe artiste, but I have. Hard."

Mitch Cardwell



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Issue #48 February / March 2009

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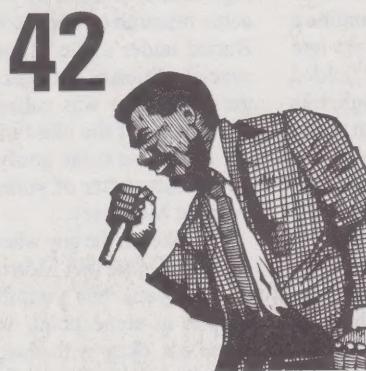
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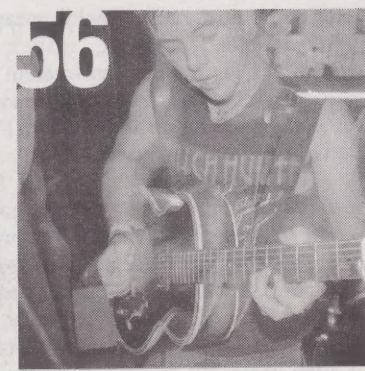
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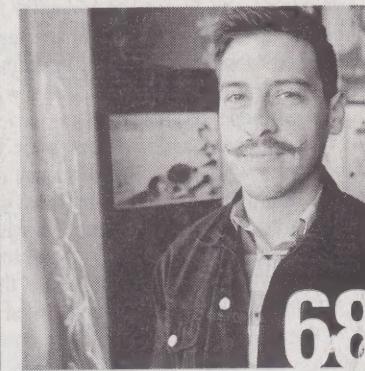
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"Everyone has youthful fantasies. Most people, at some point, will abandon them."

The Great American Young Adult Novel Experiment

It was 10 PM on the last day of November, the close of a holiday weekend for most Americans and the end of an agonizing month for your faithful correspondent. By that evening, I had managed to finish two stories, one of which would hit the world the next morning; the other would appear online a few days later. In between, I made a very late arrival at a family function wherein I fielded the usual set of questions. Oddly enough, this time, my uncle didn't ask me when I'm going to write the Great American Novel.

By 10 PM, I was stuffed with food and weary-eyed from having spent a good eight hours (a conservative estimate) at my laptop. But there was one more deadline to meet. At this point, it was already determined that the story would not be complete, but at the very least, I could try to beef up the word count a little more, try to do something so that I appeared to be less of an abysmal failure. I opened up a clean screen on the laptop and prepared to write something, anything, to get this story moving again.

And then I fell asleep.

There were a few times over the next two hours when I attempted to pry open my eyes, thinking that the writing must continue, must get another thousand words down. But I couldn't do it. Then, sometime after midnight, I woke up and looked at the clock. Liz Ohanesian was now a confirmed loser.

Sometime during the course of Halloween, I had the brilliant idea that this year I would do NaNoWriMo, a month-long writing marathon where the goal is to complete 50,000 words of pure novel. Years ago, one of my friends had convinced me to try it. I did, wrote about 1,500 words, decided that there was no story to be told, and quit.

This year was different, I told myself. This time, I had an idea, one that might not flat-out suck. I had visions of characters developing in my head. I could actually put some of this stuff down on paper and someone might actually read it without cringing. And then, I had this idea that maybe the story was secretly genius. Maybe I could out-Twilight

Stephenie Meyer. C'mon, book advance. C'mon, film options.

Of course, I didn't even have names for my characters yet. I just had a lot of ambition.

Earlier in October, I had stopped by the high school that put up with my antics to do some research on another story I was writing. Buried under a pile of memorabilia was the special edition of the *Peace Pipe*, or whatever the newspaper was called, wherein it listed the dreams of the class of 1995. Underneath my name was some goofy blurb about being a rock star writer of young adult novels and meeting Morrissey.

I looked at the guy who handed me the box.
"Well, I've met Morrissey."

Everyone has youthful fantasies. Most people, at some point, will abandon them. Some are okay with that, or at least that is what they will tell you. Others will live with regret slowly devouring them. Being a bit of a drama queen, I fall into the latter category.

I used to write fiction, stories that longed to be serious contemplations of teen angst, but always seemed to evolve into comedies of goth manners filled with so many non sequiturs that my head would spin as I read them to my friends. It was work in which I took great pride as a teenager, but would rather not let anyone read now.

Back when I was convinced that I would be Jane Austen in a pair of ripped fishnets, I spent a semester writing a screenplay that I had pitched to my freshman year screenwriting professor in true Hollywood fashion as "*12 Monkeys* meets *Heathers*" on a hand-me-down word processor that would die the day before the finished screenplay was due. One night, I was on the floor of my friend's dorm room typing on that clunky piece of antiquated junk as she studied for some sort of exam. We ended up talking about how no one we met could match the hotness of David Bowie until she fell asleep, at which point, she began babbling about a guy whose face looked like a Kandinsky painting. I stopped

writing and began to imagine someone who physically resembled a geometric hodgepodge with brightly colored shapes laying one atop another.

The next day, I told my friend about her sleep-talking episode and we spent the next few days analyzing the statement. Was it some sort of symbolism? Did she have some strangely veiled premonition? The mystery of the boy with the Kandinsky face would go on to haunt us for years until that day last October. What if there was a guy with a Kandinsky face and what if there existed a girl whose art-trip dreams came to fruition every single time? What would happen next?

The idea remained tucked away until Halloween, when I stumbled across the NaNoWriMo webpage. *Tomorrow, I thought, I'll start writing.*

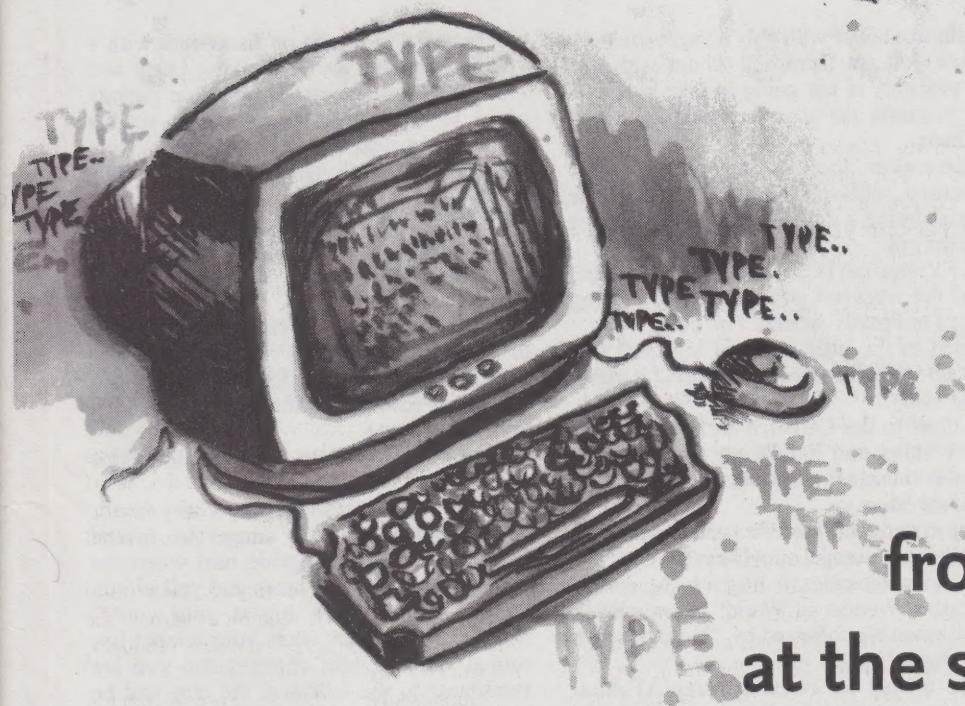
Supposedly, 50,000 words—roughly equivalent to a 175 page book—in one month is a difficult, but doable task. After ten years in existence, NaNoWriMo now attracts over 100,000 people willing to endure the process of high-speed novel writing. This year, more than 21,000 people accomplished that feat.

In order to complete NaNoWriMo, you should, ideally, write about 1,600 words per day, meaning that every night you finish with a piece of text comparable to the size of this essay. You do this for thirty days straight. The goal, according to the project organizers, is that you're writing, not that you're necessarily writing something you want to see in the new hardcover section at the local bookstore. You want to get everything from brain farts to actual prose typed into your computer. When the month is done, then you can go back, refine, redevelop, whatever.

It sounded easy enough to me. Over the years, I trained myself to write quickly, to get every bit that could constitute a story onto paper and then go back, cut, and revise.

And for the first few days it was easy. I was racing through passages 1,200 to 3,000 words at a time, watching characters develop without necessarily contemplating what they

I t's hard not to think about failure.



It keeps you from sleeping, but, at the same time, it can keep you from creating.

NATION OF AMANDA

would do next. Plot lines would develop as I sat in traffic for hours at a time, conversations would evolve while I took a shower, and somehow it all ended up on paper.

Sometime into the second week, though, the ideas ceased. I had assignments that had to be finished lest I not get paid, a day job where phones would ring constantly, where things that had no connection to anything I ever wanted out of life had to be done. There were days where I wanted nothing more than to write, but simply couldn't for a lack of hours. There were days when I could only write a paragraph because the moments that I had envisioned while tending to other issues had either completely disappeared or devolved into something I couldn't verbalize.

All the while, I was reading pep talks on NaNoWriMo's site from accomplished authors. The gist of the missives was that

this seemingly lofty goal can be reached. You, the budding novelist can find the time to write. You can abandon the fear that prevents you from writing in one great rush of words. You can do it, they said. *I can do it*, I thought.

But, I couldn't.

By the end of the month, I had hit 10,000 words. Certainly, completing NaNoWriMo was no longer an option. Still, there was a jumble of plot twists, new characters, and random bursts of conversation dying to make it onto my computer screen. And there was a holiday, which should afford a little extra time. I had to write another 5,000 words, not so much for the contest, but to prove to myself that I wasn't a quitter.

That week, I wrote about 300 words.

There were times when I came close to simply writing the word "failure" enough

times to fill up the page, but didn't. There were times when the characters said those words for me.

It's hard not to think about failure when you drastically miss even the most outlandish of goals. It keeps you from sleeping, but, at the same time, it can keep you from creating. It took four days following the end of NaNoWriMo to get over the disappointment. Four days to think that 10,000 words and change wasn't that bad considering that, if I hadn't signed up for this assignment, the total word count of the story in my head would likely still stand at zero. It's not much, but it's something. Besides, December is now known as National Novel Finishing Month. Maybe I can knock out the recommended 30,000 words by New Year's Eve.

-Liz Ohanesian



LAZY MICK

JIM RULAND

"Drink
better
beer."

New Year's Resolutions For 2007 2008 2009 (The And-This-Year-I-Really-Mean-It Edition)

Ah, New Year's Day, when a not-so-young man's fancy turns to thoughts of self improvement. Every year we make lists of our faults and flaws and devise ways to turn our negatives into positives. Every year we fail. But not this year, right?

Um, sure. But why do we get all reflective on New Year's Day? Why not the first day of spring? Or the beginning of the pro football season? What's so special about the middle of winter? The answer is simple: cheap champagne. Add a few bottles of champagne to a night of nostalgia and you end up with regret, remorse, and a plea to great merciful god in heaven to spare us from the crippling hangover. Hence: resolutions.

Here are my resolutions for 2009 good, bad, and redundant:

- Avoid conflict (especially with blood relatives, co-workers, known gangsters, the rock-throwing contingent of the neighborhood brats, and those assholes at the Department of Motor Vehicles)
- Smile more.
- Be mindful of the fact that my body is a temple and one doesn't spackle the walls of one's temple with nacho cheese.
- Pay my taxes in full and on time.
- Getting Off on the Wrong Foot #1: Do not start out the New Year by getting so drunk I end up puking in a bowling alley. In fact, deciding to spend New Year's Eve in a bowling alley can be construed as a declaration of one's low expectations. Aim higher.
- Do more favors than I ask for (unless the favor is helping you move, in which case my truck, sadly, is in the shop).
- Eat more salad and not the kind served in a giant taco shell.
- Be less judgmental of the flakey, delusional, passive aggressive, procrastinating, responsibility-shirking fuckwads in my family.
- Be more open minded about music, provided it isn't Christian nü-metal, rock en Español, ska, country-western, white boy reggae, hippie jam bands, gospel, adult alternative contemporary, flyover rock, drum and bass beats, harmonica soloists, Christmas albums, and anyone affiliated with *American Idol*, Bob Marley, or the Beatles.
- Getting Off on the Wrong Foot #2: If you start off the New Year in the guest bedroom

of a strange house with only a vague memory of how you got there and whom with, the host probably is not going to take kindly to your requests for aspirin, breakfast, and a ride home.

- Remember that as far as kids are concerned, sarcasm is pretty much the same thing as being a dick. This goes double for my own kid.
- Take a vacation in the city where I live and spend the weekend going places and doing things I ordinarily wouldn't be doing.
- Listen to the little voice in my head that pipes up when it suspects something is going to end badly.
- Be nicer to the Christian fucks that clomp up my stairs and huddle on my porch on Saturday mornings with their message of so-called salvation.
- Keep in mind that the effect of a compliment like "You are an angel out of heaven" or "Your ass is so spectacular, it ought to be named the Eighth Wonder of World" is completely ruined when it's followed by, "Now go make me a snack."
- Save money by avoiding using ATMs at sports bars, strip clubs, liquor stores, Indian casinos, race tracks, night clubs, and out-of-way massage parlors that aren't listed in the yellow pages.
- Spend less time by myself, more time with my friends.
- Aggressive does not equal assertive and bespeaks the opposite of self confidence.
- Learn how to celebrate without getting completely slobber knockered.
- Read more books or, better yet, finish more of the books that I start.
- Stand firm on my decision to not go to church and avoid places of worship.
- Remember that the grass isn't always greener (and by "grass" I invariably mean "hot piece of ass," including Kate Mara, Shannon Elizabeth, Chiaki Kuriyama, Vida Guerra, Mathangi Arulpragasam, Tyra Banks, that Brazilian chick with the Polish name that won the best bottom contest this year, the Tampa Bay Buccaneer Cheerleaders, the Corona girl in the poster at my local liquor store, that chick in my dream the other night who grabbed my junk and said "It looks like you're having a good time," and all the other beautiful women I have no realistic shot at.)
- Getting Off on the Wrong Foot #3: If the slutty looking girl with the dicey reputation you brought to the party disappears with a "friend" for the whole freaking party and miraculously reappears before your parents come to pick you up and after you've consoled yourself with eighteen wine coolers, do not call her back no matter how big her knockers are.
- Practice real communication. Email and text messages are like pornography: they're convenient but they're a poor substitute for the real thing.
- On second thought, perhaps I ought to try to avoid sports bars, strip clubs, liquor stores, Indian casinos, race tracks, night clubs, and out of way massage parlors you won't find in the yellow pages.
- Every once in a while, leave the cell phone at home.
- When that jag-off in the jeep cuts you off, do not tailgate him at dangerous speeds and then pull up alongside him when the road opens up to two lanes and yell idiotic nonsense like, "How big is your cunt?" because a mile later when your temper has cooled and the light changes and you are stuck next to the fellow in the jeep and he looks at you and asks if you'd really like to know the dimensions of his cunt, you will not have an answer for him.
- Time spent watching reality television is time I'll probably wish I had back when the Great Programmer in the Sky comes to tell me that my series has been cancelled.
- Do a much better job of explaining that spectacular doesn't necessarily mean "big" but "having an off-the-charts level of bootyliciousness."
- Be nicer to tourists, unless they're Christians.
- Drink better beer.
- When something beautiful explodes in the sky all yellow and purple and green with contrails of smoke and starbursts of light and whistling snakes and umbrellas of fire filling up the night sky like a Lite Brite on acid, the correct response is not "So what?" or "I've seen better," but "Oooh" and "Aaah."
- Learn to speak more Spanish.
- Keep in mind that the world is full of douchebags who exhibit their douchebagery with a kind of demented pride and that just because I have the misfortune of coming into contact with them doesn't make it my job to point out their douchebagery to them.

- Getting Off on the Wrong Foot #4: Arguing with your date + Las Vegas riots = long-ass walk back to the hotel.

- You know that time I said I was just going out to meet a friend at a bar for a drink and that drink turned into a few and we moved on to another place with more friends and their friendly friends and even friendlier strangers and we had shots at the bar and I played songs on the jukebox that there was no chance in hot hell the machine was ever going to play but I still hung onto the hope that I would hear them because those songs on that night felt desperately important, an importance enhanced, perhaps, by the "straightener outer" that was offered to and accepted by me in the bathroom and it fucking worked except it also had the effect of extending the night into that place where lines aren't drawn but crossed and envelopes are pushed not licked, prompting after-midnight visits to ATMs and phone calls to old friends and scribblings on cocktail napkins that had no chance of being deciphered and didn't make any sense even if they were somehow unscrambled and wouldn't you know my songs came up on the jukebox and I had to stay for all of them and I couldn't remember a time or a place where they ever sounded so sweet, felt so necessary, so essential to who and what I am and also goes a long way toward explaining why I didn't notice those text messages and voice mails, all five of them, and despite all efforts to the contrary the night did indeed end, and I drove home when I shouldn't have driven, and woke up a shambles with head full of poisonous muck? Well I'm going to try not to do that anymore.

- Never forget the importance of the three things for which there is no substitute: sex, travel, and live music.

- Try to be a better husband, father, friend, brother, son, co-worker, drinking buddy, and writer.

- The operative word is "try."

Wishing you and yours a safe, healthy, and fucking fantastic 2009!

—Jim Ruland



Be mindful of the fact that my body is a temple and one doesn't spackle the walls of one's temple with nacho cheese.



SHIFTLESS WHEN IDLE MADDY TIGHT PANTS

"No cereal + shooting people = about as cool as getting into Green Day in 2008. Seriously."

Benjamin Franklin, Death, and Bird Shit!

Attention citizens, male and female! And please, undocumented workers, members of Blotto, and others unfortunate enough not to be an official member of America U.S.A., avert your eyes! Okay, now that we've established our target audience, and in so doing, rooted out the stray terrorist-inclined Razorcake readers (which, since Razorcake recently suspended delivery to Pakistani mountain caves, already shouldn't be difficult) let the Official Patriotic Message (O.P.M.) begin!

Dear citizens! This is time for serious action! Stop agonizing over whether to alphabetize 7 Seconds in the beginning of your record collection or under "S"! Abandon your rock climbing gear! (Actually, please eliminate high-tech recreational rock climbing regardless of our nation's international conflict status.) Put down your hipster knitting project! There is no time for such frivolities, for we are living in a time of war! A time when all Americans are called upon to sacrifice for the greater good, to plant victory gardens and to raise the American flag every morning upon waking and offer up the solemn salute, "Flag, I will support you!" Yes, it IS that serious!

Of course, the obvious question is, "Since taking care of the victory garden and saluting the flag each morning only takes up about forty-five minutes each day, what should I do in my spare time?" I mean, let's be honest. That kind of serious patriotism can be accomplished in the length of 1.5 Screeching Weasel albums. Now, you could sign up for something called military service, but I've heard that they don't have Lucky Charms, and then I heard a rumor, I think in the MRR letters section, that for some reason you have to kill people, too. No cereal + shooting people = about as cool as getting into Green Day in 2008. Seriously.

So, what to do? In these troubled times, who can we look to for leadership? Who has an intuitive understanding of the American soul? Who has the universal respect necessary to command the attention of the citizenry? I mean, as much as I like the Onion Flavored Rings, can Steve Funyon really get us out of this crisis? Sadly, no. We must look back into our history, or, as Dan Quayle once so eloquently put it, "back to the back." Now,

if your childhood history classes were anything like mine, you basically just studied the explorers and the American Revolution. By the time you got to Thomas Jefferson, it was time for summer. So, our choices are few, but, fortunately, there is one man, who lived early enough in American history to be discussed in sixth grade, sometime before Thanksgiving break, to whom we can look for guidance! You know, the kite flyer, the "apple a day keeps the doctor away" guy! Yes, Benjamin Franklin!

"Waa what?" you exclaim, spitting out your coffee. "Am I supposed to make a lightning rod? I don't have the supplies! I mean, I guess I could use a coat hanger but then my clothes..." No! Stop! Benjamin Franklin's greatest accomplishment, which is also standardly referred to as "Maddy Tight Pant's Favorite Achievement of a Founding Father" is the creation of the first public library in the United States! So, naturally, if Mr. Franklin thought it appropriate, in the middle of a kite-flying and colony-developing crisis, to create a book distribution network, well, surely, he would not frown on today's patriots returning to this very institution, in a time of war, to obtain George Tabb's autobiography! Indeed, this is EXACTLY what Benjamin Franklin intended!

But I know what you're thinking. "When I get done tending to my victory garden, my hands are all dirty and calloused and soap isn't punk and my hands hurt and so, you know, I can't just run my filthy, withered hands through the library shelves!" Fortunately, you don't have to. Put down the spade and the shovel! I present to you "Maddy Tight Pants' Top Five Books I've Read (And Therefore You Should Read) This Year!"

1. *What Is the What*, by Dave Eggers: Sometimes I worry that, at a certain point in my life, I'll have discovered all of the bands I'll ever love, and will then spend the rest of my life listening to Dillinger Four's *Mutant Pop 7* and reminiscing about some basement show in 1997. So, whenever I realize that, actually, I'm pretty uninformed and kinda musically stupid, such that I hadn't even heard Dag Nasty and its concept of hardcore brotherhood until the age of twenty-six, I'm actually quite pleased!

And books? Is there a book that can be as insanely good, that can make me read 300 pages without taking a break, as *The Plague* was for me when I was fifteen? The answer, apparently, is yes! While many people have been into Dave Eggers for awhile now, I actually think I'm lucky that, until 2008, I still had the opportunity to read *What Is the What* for the first time. In fact, lately I've developed strong feelings of jealousy for people who haven't read this book yet. When I saw someone check out this book from the library two weeks ago, I didn't want to tell him, "Hey, that's a great book." No, I wanted to tell him, "If only I could be so lucky as to be you right now." But that would sound creepy, so instead I just checked out an Elizabeth Cotton CD and left.

I'm not even going to say anything about the content of this book. I'm just going to say that you should read it. Or maybe you should wait so that you minimize the amount of your life that is consumed with jealousy toward other people who haven't read this book. But, then again, you might get hit by a car tomorrow, so maybe not.

2. *A Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius*, by Dave Eggers: Question: If you stumbled across the Ramones *Rocket to Russia*, what's the logical next step? Would you say, "Wow, this is awesome!" and then go to the record store and buy a Clash bootleg LP? No! As much as I wanted to ration my Dave Eggers reading, I failed, which brings me to this book. As someone whose dad died when I was fourteen, I've never really found an even vaguely accurate rendering of having a parent die when you're a kid until I read this book. There's something so bizarre, so un-solem, and just, well, strange about having a parent die. In the movie version, for example, people don't spend the first fifteen minutes after a terminally ill family member dies flipping through the yellow pages trying to locate a funeral home and then wondering, "Wait. Do I call a funeral home or do I call 911? I mean, it's not an emergency...". But in my family, you do. And this book, a slightly fictionalized account of Dave Eggers' own experience, has dozens of those moments.

But, more importantly, at least to someone like me (the kind of person whose idea of a

When I saw someone check out this book I wanted to tell him, "If only I could be so lucky as to be you right now."

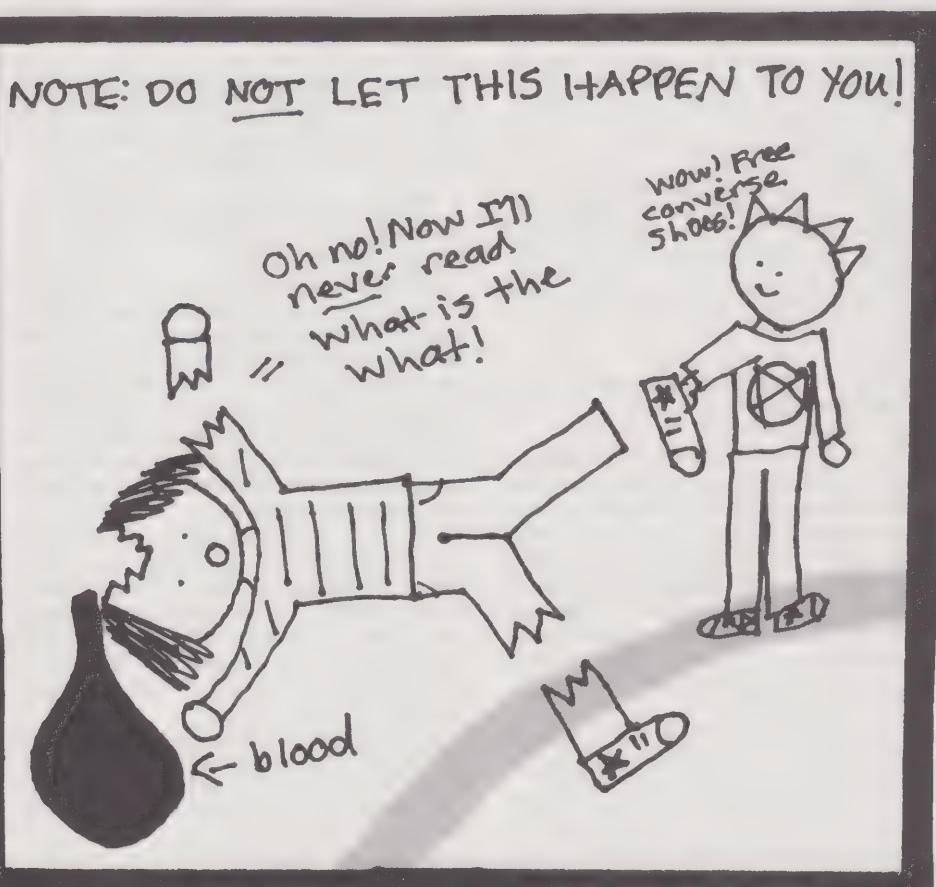
But that would sound creepy.

good time, at age twenty-nine, is jumping in a bouncy castle), this book is funny. Really, really funny. For example, when describing the narrator's diverse-nude-photo-shoot-for-his-upstart-magazine-gone-wrong, Eggers writes,

"We try to space ourselves out so when we pass her [the photographer] we will be spread out, everyone visible, all colors and sizes. It will be beautiful and poetic and it hurts like a motherfucker. Our penises flop up and down, and then as we pick up speed, slap left to right, back and forth—who would have thought left to right? The pain! People should not do this. Penises were not built for running. I think of a distended muffler scraping the pavement; I think of a bird shaking the life out of a worm.... The agony is ridiculous. We run past her, she gets maybe two frames off, and then we do it again. A dozen times at least. I begin to hold my penis for the majority of the run, letting go only when passing directly in front of her. I can't imagine what it's like for the pierced-penis guy. It's definitely not helping to keep it in place. If he has some kind of hookup, like to his navel..."

A book that combines an accurate depiction of family loss with hilarious penile-related humor? Punk rock!

3. *Collected Works*, by Andrei Platonov: While some "glass half empty" folks might go on and on about Stalin's purges, famines and grain requisitions, and the general horrors of living under the rule of a moustached lunatic, other more optimistic individuals might say, "Well, if there wasn't a ridiculously paranoid and brutal leader, we wouldn't have books making fun of this ridiculously paranoid and brutal leader!" Note: this previous statement could be called "bad logic" or, more simply, "stupid," for it is both. So, really all I need to say is that Andrei Platonov wrote a play about a Communist party leader trying to address food shortages by inventing a new food made from bird feces, grass, and sawdust. One character says to another, "Also, Ignat Nikanorovich, the flock of birds has let loose a lot of birdshit. Whole mounds of it are lying round and they say it's a real goldmine. What should I do, store it, or let it go?" Much hilarity, and much vomiting after a misguided



"taste test" ensues. You'll never look at bird droppings the same way again.

4. *On the Lower Frequencies*, by Erick Lyle: Rambling on about Benjamin Franklin has its downsides, including running out of column space. So, all I have room to say about this is that you should read it because I like it. Case closed!

5. *The Bible*, by the Holy Spirit/God: While all of the above books are great and everything, not ONE of them involves a conversation between an average guy and God concerning a sea serpent. Not one mentions giving your daughters to an angry crowd to be raped in order to protect a pair of angels. And not one of them, after devoting several hundred pages to religious devotion,

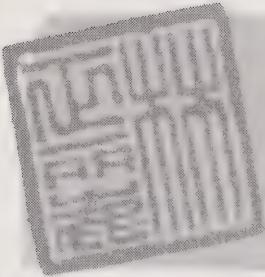
suddenly and incongruously, right when I'm starting to wonder whether deciding the read the entire Bible was really worth it, declares, "Utterly meaningless! Everything is meaningless. What does man gain from all his labor at which he toils under the sun?" The answer, to sum up the book of Ecclesiastes, is, well, not much.

If even THE WORD OF GOD declares that life is pointless, then I guess it really is true that the only reasonable thing to do is to shovel cereal into your mouth while bouncing around to *My Brain Hurts* while reading absurdist Soviet literature! So, in an odd way, my life does make sense, after all.

The End!

-Maddy





**Birds and bees
(and their
arranged
marriages).**

MONSTER OF FUN
AMY ADDYZIE

Halftime Hurrah

Insha'allah. God willing, indeed.

I am halfway through my time here, eight months have passed and there are eight months to go. The mound of sand at the bottom half of the hourglass continues to grow as those tiny grains, the ticking minutes, slowly slide through a narrow funnel. Before I'll have a chance to fully grasp this experience, the glass bulb would have emptied into the past.

For this time being, I will continue to be grateful for the present and its inspiration. While Bangladesh hasn't been completely kind to me, it's been deeply gratifying because of the students. My hope is that they will continue to bloom, and I'm lucky to be able to witness it. *Insha'allah.*

The following is a very abbreviated account of those eight months.

Bangladeshi students began arriving today, flanked by family as they trudged up flights of stairs to settle in their new dorms—across the hall from the teacher apartments. Mothers, fathers, little brothers, big sisters, aunts, uncles and grandmothers—all beaming with pride as they helped their student move in. The grammars were especially sweet. Two grandmothers of two separate students clasped their wrinkled hands around my arms, tugged me close to their chests, and thanked me.

I felt like a jerk when I was trying to make a phone call on my mobile when one gramma asked me to take care of her granddaughter.

"Please tell her I will take care of you," I said to the student and turned to smile at gramma's beautifully lined face, with a cell phone pressed against my cheek.

By Sunday, all of the students will have arrived from Nepal, Cambodia, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, and India. We're lesson planning as they unpack. They're making new friends and we're making up classroom activities. Operation: Big Bang is about to launch, helping to educate a crop of female leaders of the subcontinental region. It won't be easy, but I don't break promises to Bangladeshi grandmothers.

*

"How do you assess future greatness?" Kamal asked us, a dozen teachers sitting around him after another day of student testing. He gently slung the rhetorical question into the center of the classroom. It floated slowly to the ground as we all looked at each other and shrugged in our heads.

They've passed a first test by showing up here. Doesn't it take courage to move to

a foreign country, away from comfort and security, to invest the next year and a half of your life into an untested program, hoping its rewards will outweigh its sacrifices?

No one likes tests. They're fallacious gauges of one's complete and true ability. How does one say: *I am from a remote area of Pakistan where my father is a potato farmer. Girls like me never leave. But I have.* on a multiple choice exam?

I was never taught how to diagram a sentence and the lumbering ghost of grammar is haunting me now.

Even the most basic terms: *simple present, present progressive/continuous, past perfect progressive magic potion that makes unicorns fly.* All of it is completely foreign to me, someone who writes and has been endowed with the ability to simply discern correct grammar usage based on whether it sounds right. Unfortunately, "that sounds wrong" isn't an adequate explanation, which means that I am now forced to study grammar in order to teach it.

Let's cram grammar; shove it mercilessly into my fifteen-hour work days along with lesson planning, teaching, Bangla class, lesson planning, grading homework, creating assignments, researching lessons, and breaking and fixing the copy machine. It's the type of schedule that leaves you out of breath, drowning in ticking minutes.

I'm constantly playing catch up, without enough time to even think of decompressing at the end of each day as I crash onto my overly firm mattress. My everything reaches a point of exhaustion where I can feel the synapses in my brain shut off and recoil.

Even with the fatigue, anxiety, homesickness—even with the increasing burden of realizing that I am fully responsible for providing a legitimate post-secondary school education on a volunteer's stipend and base training—even with feeling lost, alone, and abandoned. Even when the only solace I have are those mere four to five hours of sleep inside of my droopy mosquito net. Even so, I love teaching.

Every morning I am in class 5A5, sipping on coffee sent by loved ones. As the caffeine begins to course its way through my body, it feels like the sun is shining brighter into my classroom. The lessons that I pored over take shape in 5A5.

During their first week, I introduced the following poem:

Speech to the Young : Speech to the Progress-Toward by Gwendolyn Brooks

Say to them,
say to the down-keepers,
the sun-slappers,
the self-soilers,
the harmony-hushers,
"even if you are not ready for day
it cannot always be night."
You will be right.

For that is the hard home-run.
Live not for battles won.
Live not for the-end-of-the-song.
Live in the along.

When they first read it, they were filled with the type of dread reserved for dentist office waiting rooms.

"I know this is difficult to understand now," I said. "But we will learn it together. Don't worry, you will understand this poem soon." They learned that poetry, and much of literature, can have many interpretations. They, students of rote education, were stunned to realize that something didn't have one clear answer.

There's some quiet magic in seeing these young women grapple with abstract concepts, creative and critical thinking. After studying it, they read it out loud together. Goosebumps dotted my arm when each student read a line, fully understanding this poem about determination and staying positive. They were confident and sure of the words that were emerging from them. After the last student read the last line, "Live in the along," all of their eyes lifted from the poem and small smiles beamed at me. They got it.

This is my paycheck.

I was flipping through a Cadillac-sized textbook and found a small thumbnail photograph of Robert Frost to which I commented, "Robert Frost was hot." It was Saturday night, midnight-thirty in Bangladesh, and so, naturally, the image of any type of male dude person, even if he is a deceased-questionably-hot-poet, will get me riled up.

This lack of male companionship during this year and a half is almost crippling my mental well-being. Sometimes a girl needs some dude.

What I don't need, however, is a wafer-sized cockroach lounging in my bed as I lay about leisurely, unaware of its grossness being in such close proximity. Because it'll force me to screech uncontrollably. My roommates will come in and watch me shake out my sheets so that they can slam their flip-flop onto the wretched thing as it lazily scampers away. I've hung out with creepiness in my bed before, but



STEVE LARDER

"I just love my sticker collection. It is my treasure!"

nothing is as revolting as these huge, winged roaches. Bangladeshi bedfellows are so uncool.

*

Many of our students, between eighteen and twenty-one years old, are generally ignorant about sex. It was suggested that the teachers could discuss the birds and bees (and their arranged marriages), but I was wholly unprepared to do any such thing.

I, Amy Adoyzie, can talk about sex. But I am not equipped to *educate* about sex. Just because I can thoroughly enjoy a five-course dinner doesn't mean I can cook it.

After the faculty meeting about *the talk*, I was with our Storytelling & Independent Publishing extra curricular activity group where I am a co-advisor. The students were writing about something they considered to be a treasure and they talked about them: a family portrait, a laughing Buddha statue, a T-shirt from grandpa.

"My treasure is something I really love," Loda gushed and smiled. "It is my sticker collection. Stickers express all of human emotions. Sometimes they are smiling. Sometimes they are crying. They can show the feelings of people." Her enthusiasm rushed out of her as she began to speak quickly. "I just love my sticker collection. It is my treasure!"

I'm a long ways away from the teenagers with whom I went to high school, young mothers and thuggish gang bangers who would eat Loda for breakfast with a side of toast. How could I relate sex—the trauma, the pleasure, the uncertainty, the love, the touches, the mechanics—to a girl who says she can't live without stickers? I couldn't. Not with a straight face, at least.

*

I've hit my stride, leaning against the white board. Struggling to explain vocabulary words or abstract ideas is just this thing I do now. I am a conduit of information and ideas. It would seem that this is greater than the ability to shoot a basketball or hit a golf ball—but somehow Nike never sponsors teachers, one of the most undervalued resources of our culture.

Isn't it time? And shouldn't it begin with me? The one who left behind fresh salads and late nights with friends in smoky bars to be here.

I'm doing it. I've got the lesson plans and dateless nights to prove it.

*

When I read Shirley Jackson's *The Lottery* in high school, my mind was blown. Since my students are not accustomed to having any parts of their bodies warped by literature, I took great pleasure in their reactions. I

anticipated that they wouldn't like it for its brutal and morbid ending, and therefore would not appreciate its craftsmanship.

"Did you like the story?" I asked and received a tepid response.

"The ending was too shocking. It was too much cruel, ma'am." They made sour faces and widened their eyes for emphasis.

"So, you didn't like the way it ended, huh? It wasn't a happy ending."

"Yes, ma'am."

"But," I reasoned, hopefully, "even if you don't like the ending, is it still a great piece of literature?" There was a slight beat and I feared that they would all emphatically shake their heads. Instead, in an even louder chorus, they all agreed, "Yes!"

Months ago, I had to validate literature on an almost daily basis. And now they're slowly becoming discerning critics with the ability to value a well-written piece even if the story didn't unfold as they had wished. This liberal arts education may work after all.

-Amy Adoyzie

More of this nonsense at amyadoyzie.com



OUT NOW! SHIT YEAH! ON GO KART RECORDS!

BANNER PILOT

RESIGNATION DAY

PUNK ROCK IN THE VEIN OF LAWRENCE ARMS AND LEATHERFACE.

Some Reviews:

"The awesomeness is almost totally overwhelming.... Banner Pilot makes me feel young and reminds me of everything that I love about punk rock music...they do it better than just about anyone else right now and it's fucking great" -- *The Sun*

"Watertight melodic punk that's as close to perfect as this genre of music can get to.... Gruff, direct, plainclothes Midwest punk" -- *Hybrid Magazine*

"Resignation Day shows you that straight up punk rock still lives and thrives right down to the last catchy chord" -- *Fire Only*

"It is pretty hard to find a band that just plays in your face punk rock music these days, but Banner Pilot is that band" -- *Question Magazine*

"Heartfelt, gritty goodness" -- *Hybrid Magazine*

"A near-perfect combination of Dillinger Four, Lawrence Arms and Screeching Weasel influences.... the depth of the songwriting is beyond question" -- *PopMatters*

"Anthemic, angst-ridden and, yet, ambitious - this is ace from start to finish... It's almost the perfect hybrid of pop and hardcore - something that's often attempted badly Banner Pilot make look easy" -- *RockN*

"I feel a little bit beat down and heartbroken and simultaneously a little bit rejuvenated every time I hear it.... One of the best albums to come out this year" -- *Rebel Noise*

"Channel(s) the spirit of genre-forefathers Jawbreaker, both sonically and lyrically" -- *Sound*

"The songs are rough and gruff but still tinged with an unmistakable sense of harmony and melody" -- *The Punk Site*

"This album is so goddamned good.... some undeniable Jawbreaker action thrown in.... I honestly can't stop listening to this record" -- *Rise Above*

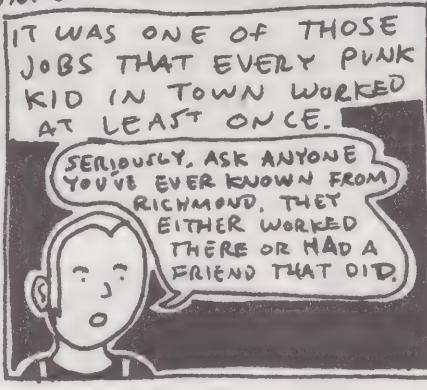
"The ingredients were all on the table here for Banner Pilot, and on Resignation Day they utilize them in near-perfect harmony to create a delicious slab of punk rock. It does the body good" -- *What You Heard*

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A MONKEY TO RIDE THE DOG

SEAN CARSWELL

LET HIM GO

I was checking out Chester Himes's first novel, *If He Hollers Let Him Go*, the other day, trying to remember how that rhyme went. Eeny, meeny, miny, moe, catch a.... And I couldn't remember what you were supposed to catch by his toe. I remembered how I learned the poem, but I knew that wasn't right. I knew there was something else you were supposed to catch by the toe, but I couldn't, for the life of me, remember what it was. I dug around in the recesses of my brain, trying to bring it up. It wouldn't come to me. I didn't want to look it up on the internet because 1) I don't want wikipedia to become my long-term memory and 2) come on, I had to remember what I was really supposed to let go if he hollered.

Eventually, I gave up thinking and slunk back to my computer to look it up. Tiger. You probably already know this, but it's a tiger that you catch by the toe.

I sat there, looking at my computer screen, thinking, who the fuck ever heard of catching a tiger by his toe? I looked at all the different versions—fishy, piggy, monkey—and none of them sounded familiar. One British version caught a fairy by his toe. I could've pictured us as kids using that one, if we'd been British, if someone had thought of it. But we never did. So tiger. It must've been tiger.

The thing is, though, we never said tiger. When I was a little kid, hanging out with all the kids in the neighborhood, divvying up teams for wiffle ball or whatever, we always said, "Eeny, meeny, miny, moe, catch a nigger by the toe." I find it hard to picture now: a bunch of cute little White kids, mostly blond, tan in the Florida sun, gathered up for a game of something in the street, looking as all-American as can be. And we were all-American with our little rhymes of "catch a nigger by his toe, if he hollers let him go."

I don't know what we said when Rudy Smith played with us. Probably the same thing.

By the time I was old enough to know better, I'd quit making my choices using that rhyme.

I'm not sure where it came from. I'm sure my parents didn't teach it to me that

way. I don't blame it on the fact that I grew up in the South, either. I remember hanging out with some older cousins in New York. I was only five or six years old. One of my cousins had taught me a joke, and he was prodding me to tell the other cousins. I wasn't all that stoked on telling the joke because I didn't get it. I told it anyway: "Sammy Davis, Jr. walks onto a bus. The bus driver says to him, 'Back of the bus, nigger.' Sammy Davis, Jr. says, 'But I'm not a nigger. I'm a Jew.' So the bus driver says to him, 'Get off.'"

I didn't know who Sammy Davis, Jr. was. Hell, I didn't even know what a Jew was. I did know that jokes like that got me in with the older kids.

Then, there was this other time. I was in my late twenties, living back in Atlanta, hanging out at the Little Five Points Pub. A guy walked in the door. It took me a second to recognize him. He sat two stools over from me and took his own couple of seconds to remember me. His name was Andy. He'd been a regular at another bar where I used to work the last time I'd lived in Atlanta. We said our hellos and chatted for a bit. Andy said, "It's been a long time."

And it had been a long time since we'd seen each other. The two years that separated my lives in Atlanta flashed through my head. I'd lived in a couple of other towns, made and lost friends, traveled all around the continent, held a few jobs, got fired from one of them and almost got into a fistfight with my boss just so that I could pry my final paycheck from his fingers. The two years seemed like dog years to me. So I expressed this passage of time to Andy the best way I knew how. I said, "Yeah, it's been a coon's age."

"A what?" Andy said, suddenly angry.

"A coon's age," I said. "You know, like a raccoon could have been born and lived his whole life in the time since I saw you last."

"Oh," Andy said, but he seemed like he was done talking to me.

The bartender came along, chatted with both of us, and the afternoon started to while away.

A few minutes later, I remembered that "coon" was a racist term for a Black

"Everything that leads to progress can be a pain in the ass."

person. I was White. Andy was Black. We were sitting deep inside of Georgia. Fuck.

I thought about that expression. Did it really mean what I thought it meant? Was a coon's age really the lifespan of a raccoon, or something that makes less sense but is more racist? Was Andy sitting there, fuming that he had to sit next to a racist motherfucker like me? Should I apologize? Would it help?

I don't remember how I handled the situation. I probably just had another drink.

I thought the word "pickaninny" referred to the braids that little Black girls wore. I thought this because I remember once standing with my mom and one of her friends, who was an elementary school teacher at the school that I went to, and my mom's friend saw two little Black girls with braids and said, "Oh, look at the cute little pickaninnies."

I was very embarrassed when, decades later, I learned what pickaninny really meant.

I've been thinking about all of this stuff lately, and probably for obvious reasons. I think I was a member of the last generation in America that was raised amidst such flippant racist language. In the late eighties, the whole Political Correctness movement came along. And it got a lot of backlash because no one knew what was okay to say and what wasn't. The term African American doesn't exactly work, because what about someone like Charlize Theron, who grew up in South Africa, immigrated to the U.S., and is White as hell? Isn't she an African American? And what do we call Black people in Europe? And the terms black and white don't work because we're talking, in all cases, of a variety of browns. So you can capitalize White and Black to indicate that you're referring not to a color but to a social construct, but even as I capitalize these words in this column, I feel like a pretentious jerk. So, granted, Political Correctness is a pain in the ass.

Still, it's got to be preferable to allowing an otherwise nice little kid like myself to grow up chanting "catch a nigger by his toe."

I DON'T REMEMBER HOW I HANDLED THE SITUATION.



BRAD BEshaw

I PROBABLY JUST HAD ANOTHER DRINK.

As I've said, whatever term you use now, it's going to be inexact. The term "people of color" may seem like the silliest because not only are all people "of color," but the term itself is just a syntactical variant of the old racist term "colored people." Regardless, if we go beyond these pithy little observations, we can recognize that, at least as a society, White people stopped saying "nigger." That has to be a great thing.

The term itself was created by a slave holding society. It's the derogatory term that reasserts White superiority. Every time it's used by a White person, whether he's a Nazi or a little kid deciding who's going to be the captains of the wiffle ball teams, it's reasserting racial superiority. This is more serious than we typically acknowledge. There have been various neuroscientific studies recently that show that language causes us to react in ways that we've only recently begun to understand.

The word "nigger" is a good example of this. It's a difficult word for me. I can type it and use it in this column, but I can't bring myself to say it out loud, even here

in my office, where I'm completely alone. I had a vague idea of why this was. I knew it was something about hearing that word in the voice of a White guy who has the accent of a former slaveholding state. But then I came across a book called *The Stuff of Thought* by Steven Pinker. Pinker explains that when we use certain words, it triggers a flow of oxygen into the limbic system in our brain. "Nigger" is one of those words. When we hear it or say it, our thought patterns flee the more rational frontal lobe of our mind and race down to the reptilian part of our brain. We literally race back to an early stage of evolution. This isn't to say that saying the word makes you dumber, it just means that, when you say this word, you're using the dumbest part of your brain.

So then I think again about Political Correctness and all the backlash against it. I can understand how it can be a pain in the ass. Everything that leads to progress can be a pain in the ass. Some people feel like restricting the words we can say is a form of censorship. Well, it can be. But in

the case of attacking the word "nigger," no one banned you from using it. You're welcome to use it. You just look like a jackass if you do. And you should look like a jackass. You're using the least evolved part of your brain when you say it. But I shouldn't say "you" here. Chances are you're not doing this at all. Chances are, you've evolved.

I'm not saying that demonizing the use of that one particular word has ended racism and paved the way for a Black U.S. president or anything drastic like that. I'm just trying to understand how we teach things like racism to little kids and how it was taught to me. Also, I think that demonizing certain terms has stuffed racism into the closet, as opposed to making it something that is overtly indoctrinated into us.

Hopefully, we're all better off catching tigers by the toe.

-Sean Carswell

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CHICO SMIO

"PIXELOVE"

ART F.
12-08

1985: STUPID CARTRIDGE! HAD TO BLOW IN IT LIKE 20 TIMES TO GET IT WORKING. WHICH STAGE FIRST, CUTMAN OR GUTSMAN?



1996: JEEZUS!!!
SHOOT THE ZOMBIE!
SHOOT IT! SHOOT IT!



1981: HA! CRAZY KONG IS JUST LIKE DONKEY KONG WITH WEIRD COLORS!

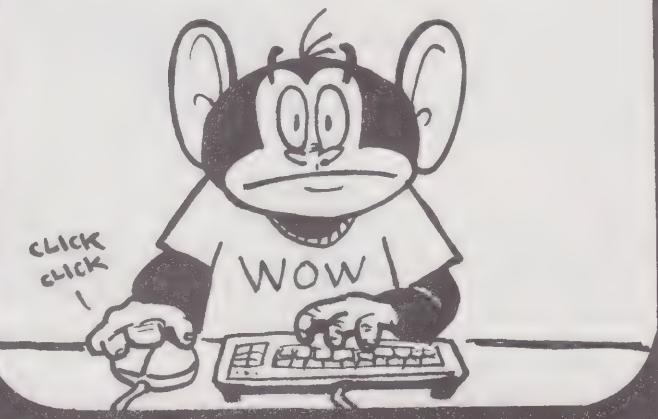


1991: PFFT!! BALROG'S A JOKE! EAT "SPINNING BIRD KICK", LOSER!



2004:

Looking For Group: combat dagger
rogue LFG for MC attunement PST



THE DINGHOLE REPORTS

RHYTHM CHICKEN

"He began hitting harder, louder, and with even LESS percussive skill!"

Imitation Chicken

The Dinghole Reports
By The Rhythm Chicken
(Commentary by Francis Funyuns)
[Edited by Dr. Sienarf]

Dinghole Report #98: McCain and Obama, sittin' in a tree...

(Rhythm Chicken sighting #425)

It was a pleasant enough autumn festival in a pleasant enough northern Wisconsin town. The streets were packed with parents and children, tourists and locals, drunks and God-fearing Republicans. Welcome to Sister Bay. Welcome to Fall Fest. The Fall Fest parade was about to embark. I had my ever-crumbling drumset nailed onto the back end of an old trailer. There were some hay bales behind me for my floatmates to sit on. Nate and Dan the Eggman were wearing their rubber McCain and Obama masks, ready to wave to the festive crowds while I dished out my ruckus rock. This day was also my father's 75th birthday, and he was in the crowd. Man-oh-man, what a can-o-worms!

With a sign reading *Happy 75th Birthday Dad*, the Chicken float pulled into the parade and my opening drumroll commenced. The crowd had seen my rolling circus before and was ready for this year's version. With every ounce of Chickenpower I possessed, I was frantically KILLING my drums with wild-ass rhythms! I pounded. I taunted. I riled'em up. I riled'em down! I pulled out every physical and mental trick in the book to give them a view of MAXIMUM ruckus!

This should have been like any other parade appearance, but something seemed different. The crowds were cheering and yelling, as usual, but somehow THEIR timing seemed off. They were yelling at awkward times, not corresponding with my valiant raising of the wings. There were hoots and hollers when I would raise my wings, but then there were louder ones at other strange times when I wasn't doing anything extraordinary. I was truly baffled.

By the parade's end, I could finally take my Chickenhead off and regroup. While replenishing myself with a can of Hamms, I noticed Nate and the Eggman pulling off their election masks and laughing hysterically. I asked them why the crowd was yelling at all the wrong times. Nate stifled his laughter long enough to say, "Oh, I don't know. Maybe it was because Obama

and McCain were MAKING OUT from time to time!" Well, there you have it. My own friends are now stealing my thunder, hogging the spotlight to display public outbursts of steamy homoerotic campaign images. Boy, talk about GAY!

(Bonkers, Chicken! Could quiet little Sister Bay HANDLE such a show right in the middle of their wholesome little parade? - F.F.)

To tell the truth, they really seemed to like it! After the many months of seeing McCain and Obama at each others' throats, seeing them joined at the lips was a refreshing sight! Then, there's my father. After the parade, I asked him if he liked the float. He replied, "Yeah, I liked the *Happy Birthday* sign." Then I asked if he saw McCain and Obama. He squinted his eyes and looked around saying, "Why? Are they here?"

[Boy, Mr. Chicken. You sure are getting into questionable situations with your recent parades! Displaying of pornographic materials! Interracial non-partisan exhibits of gay love! I'm surprised Door County hasn't driven you out yet with pitchforks and torches! - Dr. S.]

Well, to tell the truth, they don't have to drive me out. I'm leaving.

(LEAVING? AGAIN? - F.F.)

[Don't tell me you're moving back to POLAND again? - Dr. S.]

(No, wait. Let me guess. Bulgaria? Alaska? The Czech Republic? Slovakia? - F.F.)

No, no, no, no, and no. I've been cooped up here in northern Wisconsin for over two and a half years now. As much as I love it, I can't stay. To stay here this winter would surely break me financially and mentally. I'm choosing not to spend this winter watching the snow drifts grow in my yard. My winter job here is closing up this year so I would be left with too much free time to sit in boredom and spend too much money that I wouldn't be making. No, I will not be leaving the country, but I WILL be leaving the Midwest.

[(GASP!!! - F.F. & Dr. S.)]

I will be leaving my beloved northwoods trailer behind, along with my car and most of

my belongings. It will be just me, my bike, some clothes, and my Chickenhead boarding Amtrak and heading to a more biking-friendly climate.

(Oh, great! You're joining your snowbird parents in FLORIDA! - F.F.)

[Really, Mr. Chicken. I don't think you're quite ready for the endless sea of retirement communities down there. I mean, you're OLD, but you're not THAT old. - Dr. S.]

No. I will not be migrating to the punk rock capitol of the south. I will be far away from the former Confederate territories.

(Ok, you're bringing your bike. Is it gonna be Portland? Los Angeles? San Diego? - F.F.)

Dunghill Report #1: RC Dishes out IMITATION RUCKUS!

(Rick Chomeau sighting #1)

So, another Sister Bay Fall Fest weekend was drawing to a close. As the tourists were filing out of town to the south, the locals were gathering at a favored watering hole in the north. Yes, it was time for another "Fall Down Fest," that Sunday night when all the locals gather at JJ's La Puerta to celebrate the end of yet another tourist season. The Blatz was flowing heavily and spirits were high. I arrived after work that night and started to mingle with my friends and neighbors. Here and there, some locals would elbow me and ask, "So, we gonna see that Rhythm Chicken here tonight?" I would just shrug and pretend not to know. You see, the Rhythm Chicken has ALWAYS played at Fall Down Fest whenever possible. In fact, it's gotten to be almost too predictable.

A little while later, I was finishing up my first man-mug of Blatz (*man-mug* is Sister Bay lingo for "pitcher") and chatting with my friend Rick Chomeau. Rick was rather Blatzed himself and asking me when the Chicken was gonna make his appearance. I told him the Chicken was not ready yet. Rick was tired, drunk, and wanted to go home, but he didn't want to miss the Chicken's gig. He was being rather insistent that I play. Finally, I said, "Well, if YOU want the Chicken to play right now, why don't YOU be the Rhythm Chicken?!" This ignited a taunting debate about whether Rick had the BALLS to be a Rhythm Chicken. The dare was made, and that's all it took. This was gonna be GREAT!



REPLAY DAVE

"Oh, I don't know. Maybe it was because Obama and McCain were MAKING OUT from time to time!"

Rick and I both ran out to my car and grabbed the Chickenkit. As we carried it in and pushed through the crowd, we could hear other locals mumbling to each other, "Hey, look. The Rhythm Chicken's gonna play!" The crowd gathered around in anticipation while I put the drums together in the middle of the room. Then I ran outside to get the Chickenhead. Rick was out there and ready to go. I handed him the head and said, "Well, here you go!" Rick peered into the old, moldy, rotten head and said, "Eew. Here I go." He took one last pull from his beer and put on the head. I ran inside.

Moments later, RC (Rick Chomeau) stumbled into the packed tavern and fumbled his way to the drum throne. The crowd cheered, ready for more Chicken ruckus. I pushed my way up front. I REALLY wanted to see this! Rick then sort of tapped out a mild racket on the snare and floor tom, completely lacking in rhythm.

I raised my beer and yelled, "Whooooo! Hey everyone, LOOK! It's the RHYTHM CHICKEN!!!" Rick tinkered with a few more snare and tom hits. The crowd began to boo and yell out, "LOUDER!!!" This pushed Rick to turn it up a few notches. He began hitting harder, louder, and with even LESS percussive skill! The crowd began boozing more and more while Rick played louder and louder. I was literally beside myself; I was FINALLY seeing the Rhythm Chicken!

The boos became too much and Rick ran out of steam. He lowered his sticks and then pulled off the Chickenhead. The entire drunken crowd let out a collective, "WHA?????" The false Rhythm Chicken was exposed to all the locals. I yelled out, "Oh my GOD! Rick Chomeau is the Rhythm Chicken!" Just then, JP, another local, yells out, "Yeah! It's the RICKEN CHICKEN!!!" The place erupted in laughter. I tore down my kit, threw it in the

car, and returned to more people asking me when the *real* Rhythm Chicken was gonna play. I would just take a pull off of my man-mug and reply, "Huh, didn't you see him? He just played."

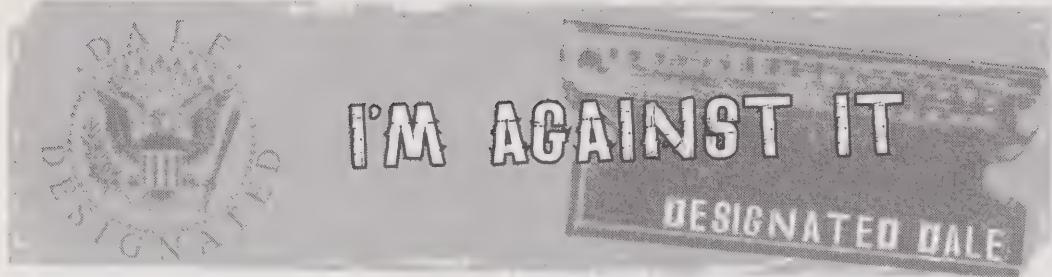
(Okay, okay, so RC is actually Rick Chomeau. Very funny, Chicken. Now, where are you moving to? – F.F.)

[Yeah, Mr. Chicken. Where will your new nest be? Dallas? New Orleans? – Dr. S.]

I knew I wanted to move to a place that was a lot like Sister Bay. I wanted it to be a nice, quiet, wholesome little town, quaint and sedate. With all this in mind, I decided to move to... Las Vegas.

[(LAS VEGAS?! – F.F. & Dr. S.)]

-Rhythm Chicken



I'M AGAINST IT
DESIGNATED DALE

"Shalom, you fucking apes of wrath!"

BARAKY FUCKIN' RAMONE!

A large majority of America's been breathing a hopeful sigh of relief since this past November. We've got a new gatekeeper over on Pennsylvania Ave. in Washington D.C. that's bound and determined to get this country back on track. Man, as promising as he's sounding, I sure as hell wouldn't want to be anywhere near Obama's shoes, especially after the last eight years of leadership monkeyshines (read: pooping in this country's lap) that have led the U.S. into one of the biggest deficits and economic turmoil eerily parallel to our country's early depression. Let's not forget mentioning a war across the pond these last years that's been adding an ocean's worth of fuel to the United States' already-burning financial fire. Is Obama going to come through the victor after his first term? When confronted face to face with our own jobs, four years seems like an eternity to most people, but forty-eight months for one guy and his hand-selected team of officiates seems like hardly any time at all to dive in feet-first and kicking, trying to put a dent in the last guy's overflowing inbox. What an all-around mess. I can clearly hear my father now, if he were still around today: "The new guy's fucked." Even if Obama bags a second term (and we shall see after these next four years), even eight years would seem to whisk by before he could completely untie that huge ball of string that's been snarling like mad during the last two terms of our country's presidency. I sincerely wish the new guy all the best. He's got quite a long road ahead of him, to say the least.

During the last year or so of the presidential campaigning, I was curious to hear the reactions from different people as to who they were gunning for and why. I listened to those who thought John McCain was the correct turn to make in the fork in the road for the Republican Party's new direction, whatever that may have led to. I listened to those who actually thought that McCain picking Sarah Palin as his running mate was a step in the right direction for this country's future. I've got to say, there was a shitty taste in my mouth the day it was announced that she would be his running mate. It's *not* because she's a woman, but because McCain and his camp had obviously schemed that women would find this appealing. It was an opportunistic ploy to snatch up any on-the-fence women voters who felt assed-out from

Hilary Clinton losing the Democratic primary or those who were just plain undecided. How absolutely insulting that was to voters across the board. Do I think that McCain would've chosen the same exact running mate from Alaska, had that prospective running mate a dick between their legs? I'd be willing to put up my record collection that he wouldn't have (yes, every 7" and LP, Ramones vinyl included, homie!). Like I said—how absolutely insulting.

Then I heard some people's reasoning of why they thought Barack Obama was a bad idea. The one comment that reminded me of how far we upright-walking humans have to go is, "He's black. This country's never had a black president before and, you know, this is how a lot of shit starts." No, I don't know. "A lot of shit"? Would that be a whole lot of the same shit that this country's up to its eyeballs in now, or would that really be some load of racist shit that this same country gave to a vast number of different kinds of people years back (and still does, unfortunately). A jerk by any other name is still a jerk, and I could care less about color, religious association, or sexual orientations. Jerks and their jerky douchebagery are prevalent in any list of different types of people. "But him being black—don't you think that's going to obscure his sight of what really needs to get done? You don't see 'his people' getting special interest?" Are you fucking kidding me? Under-the-table hand jobs (special interests) have been going on for eons, but these don't necessarily end as far as race is concerned. Again, find me one single type of people who *haven't* indulged in special interests. Exactly.

And as far as that "his people" jive, who exactly would fall under the description of "Obama's people"? Do you mean the black folks? Or do you mean the Kenyans, the Irish, the Germans, or the English? That's right, all you Archie Bunkers of various colors, it's all a bit more involved than previously thought, isn't it? I personally love the fact that the new prez is somewhat of a blander baby. Why? Because Obama, like a whole lot of Americans (myself included), are blander babies to some varying degree or another, and not of just the "black and what have you" nature. The U.S. can be a virtual Rubik's Cube when it comes to breaking down one's heritage, and not only is it fascinating to see

how different races and cultures affect the scope of one's life, but, more importantly, it can hopefully teach a heck of a lot of understanding along the way. Here are some great examples...

Chuck Berry (my king of all kings of rock'n'roll) rose up from St. Louis with an unbelievable guitar style that had him playing shows here in the States from coast to coast. Some of the packed gigs he performed were in front of bi-racial audiences, but with whites on one side of the hall and blacks on the other side, most times cordoned off down the middle with an actual rope. Now, although he was more than welcome to bring in a packed crowd for a promoter's lucrative show, Chuck was *never* welcome to stay at a hotel in the white part of town after a gig. This was unheard of at that time. And, yes, this was in the good ol' 1950s. Can you say, "Thanks for all the money, now get the fuck out of my neighborhood, Mr. Berry?" This also happened too often with other black artists on the rock and roll circuit, including those who were in jazz and big bands. This mentality just isn't wrong, it's downright disgusting.

Judas Priest, since their first LP came out in 1974, has been hailed by some as one of the be-all, end-all bands as far as metal is concerned. I'd dug what the band had done over the years, although when it came to metal, I was (and still am) partial to Ozzy-era Black Sabbath, Bon Scott-era AC/DC, early Iron Maiden, the first four Metallica LPs (the rest you can flush), and all things Slayer. (Motörhead gets no mention here because as metal as some of their tuneage can lean, Motörhead is still a rock'n'roll band, and one of the last ones at that, thank you very much.) Growing up with others who were into metal was interesting. Some of these people wouldn't be caught dead listening to anything remotely outside of the metal spectrum, something which I got ostracized for by some of these close-minded meatheads. Just because I swear by Iron Maiden's *Killers* LP, that doesn't make me any less of a person because of my hardcore allegiance to the Psychedelic Furs or Dramarama (both of whom are fantastic rock bands and that I'm still 100% backing to this very day).

But I caught lot of shit from not backing down with what I really love: "What's

The good ol' 1950s.

Can you say,

"Thanks for
all the money,
now get the
fuck out of my
neighborhood,
Mr. Berry?"



KIYOSHI NAKZAWA

with all the new wave fag shit?" "Fuckin' faggots—look at the way they dress!" "Dude, look at these guys. They look like a bunch of queers!" Ironically, it was always with the homophobic comments about any band that dared stray the path of metal righteousness with these knuckleheads (to be fair, not all of 'em were knuckleheads, but most were). Funny thing was Rob Halford (Judas Priest's vocalist) had been constantly sporting some pretty extreme leather biker garb onstage over the years, complete with leather riding crop and leather cap. Some fifteen years later in 1998, Halford came out of the closet to the general public in a television interview. I wonder if the words "fag," "faggots," or "queers" would've spilled out of those idiot knuckleheads' mouths as easily back in 1983 had they've known of Halford's secret taste in men (not that it even fucking matters). What a foot-in-mouth moment that would've been. Dumbasses.

The Ramones have always made anything and everything fair game when it came to writing song lyrics. Their debut LP featured a song called "Blitzkrieg Bop" (read the lyrics) as well as a song called "Today Your Love, Tomorrow The World," penned in jest about a little German boy who would one day take over the world. As wincingly Nazi Germany as these lyrics are, Seymour Stein (Sire Records' head honcho) pleaded with the band to consider changing the lyrics in these particular songs. He thought they were commercial suicide. Seymour was Jewish. Although Seymour *always* got the sense of humor the Ramones were going for, the band flat-out refused to budge on re-writing *anything*. Seymour threw his hands up in the air and went through with the Ramones' original plan. Critics far and wide were horrified that this band out of nowhere was dropping a vinyl bomb of glue sniffing, alienation, Nazi vision, and the abuse of

children with a baseball bat. The Nazi thing was really played up in the press and it shocked some critics even further once they found out the lead singer was as Jewish as you could get: Jeffry Hyman, aka, Joey Ramone. What really makes me stop and think was going to all those Ramones gigs the past years and seeing clusterfucks of neo-Nazi skinheads show up. Shalom, you fucking apes of wrath! The joke was most definitely on you. (Insert Nelson Muntz laugh here.)

If Obama comes through with *part* of his vision, even if he gets it going in the right direction, I'd be happily stumped. As far as the rest of us? Think of this planet as possibly being that much better if people kept their minds as open as their mouths.

I'm Against It,
—Designated Dale
designateddale@yahoo.com





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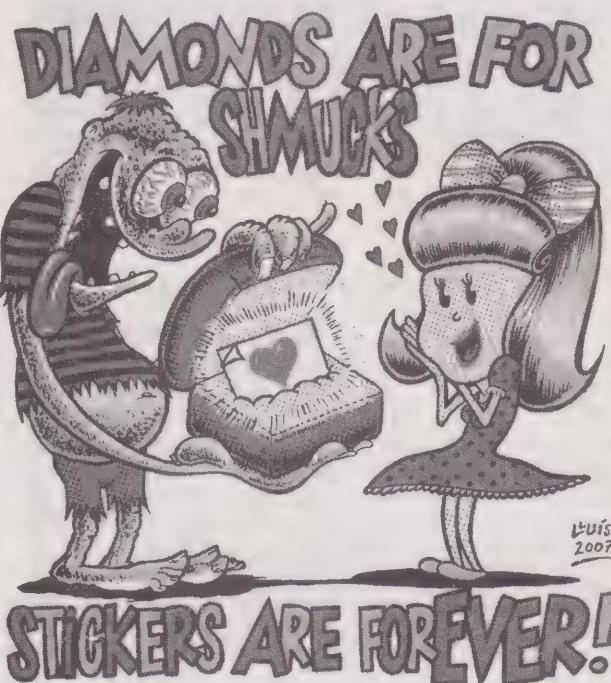
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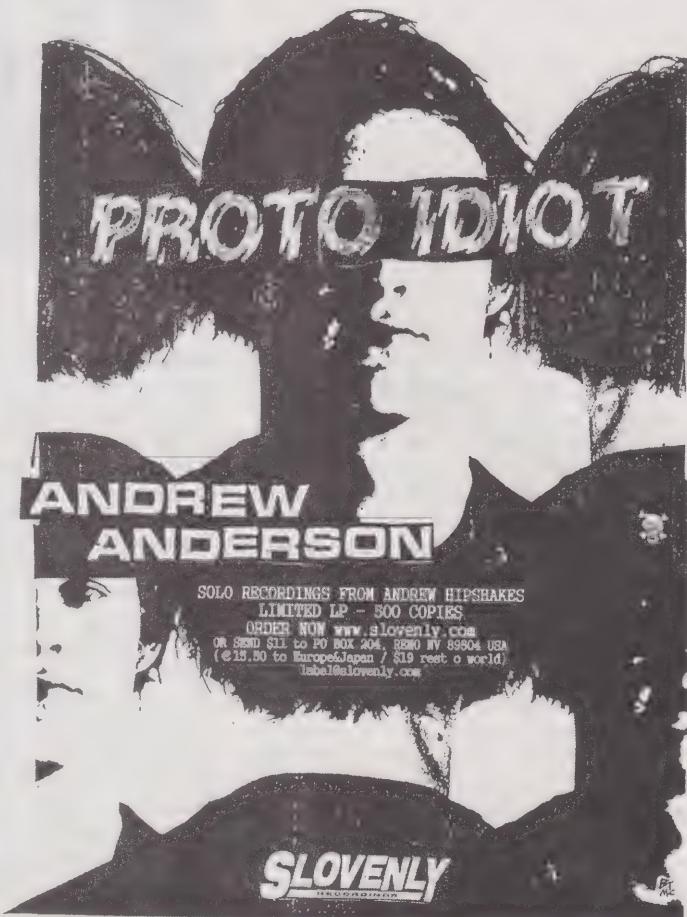


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A MULTI SICKING POO THAT COMES OUT LIKE IT WAS SQUEEZED OUT OF A PLAY-DOH SPAGHETTI MAKER.



THE SECRET AFFAIR

WHEN YOU WIPE AFTER YOU GO POO AND THE TOILET PAPER IS PERFECTLY CLEAN.



AKA THE VIRGIN POO

END OF THE SECRET AFFAIR

WHEN YOU WIPE AFTER GOING POO AND THE T.P. IS PERFECTLY CLEAN EXCEPT FOR BLOOD IN THE SHAPE OF A KISS.



MAYBE YOU NEED TO SEE A DR.

THE BAIT + SWITCH

WHEN YOU THINK YOU JUST HAVE A FART BUT THEN A POO COMES OUT PART WAY, TOUCHES YOUR UNDERWEAR AND YOU CAN'T RETRACT IT BACK INSIDE THE SAFETY ZONE.



I MAKE COMICS LIKE A PRO

SNAKE PIT'S REVENGE

AKA

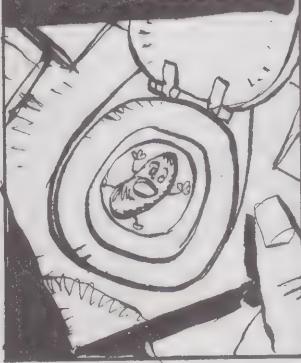
THE BAIT + SWITCH + UNDERWEAR DITCH
WHEN YOU THINK YOU HAVE A FART BUT GO DIARRHEA IN YOUR PANTS WHILE RIDING A BICYCLE.

DEDICATED TO BEN SNAKE PIT



MISSION IMPOSSIBLE

WHEN YOU TAKE A POO IN SOMEONE ELSE'S TOILET + TAKE A PICTURE OF IT WITH THEIR CAMERA WITHOUT THEM EVER KNOWING. BEST WITH FILM CAMERAS.
AKA THE CRAPPY CRAWL



NEVER ENDING WIPE

WHEN YOUR ASS STAYS FILTHY EVERYTIME YOU WIPE IT. YOU KEEP WIPE IN HOPES THAT THE T.P. WILL BE FREE OF POO STREAKS BUT IT NEVER IS, JUST LIKE YOUR SIN STAINED SOUL.



DON'T FEEL LIKE A FREAK BECAUSE WE MAKE THE PAPER FRESH AFTER YOU WIPE
IT IS HOW WE MAKE SHIT WE'RE CLEAN

IVORY SOAP, LAVA SOAP, DOVE SOAP, SOFT SOAP, GRANDPA'S SOAP, TRADER JOE'S CASTILE SOAP

PURELL SANITIZER, PATCHOULI SOAP, LEVER 2000, DIAL, COAST, IRISH SPRING, FELA, NARITA

DR. BRONNER SOAP, CAMAY ALL OVER!, MR. BUBBLES, JOHNSON & JONSON, KISS MY FACE, CALGON,

BLEACH, PINESOL, LIQUOR, WINDEX, AMMONIA, 409, CLOROX, COMET, ATAXI, AVON PRODUCTS, HYDROGEN PEROXIDE

11/08



MYSPEC.COM/DMZINE
RAZORCLIQUE 25

"I gotta remind the chicken, my manager's name is The Colonel."

WHO ARE YOU?

Nardwuar The Human Serviette versus The San Diego Chicken

Nardwuar: Who are you?

San Diego Chicken: In real life I'm The San Diego Chicken... or maybe that's my alter-ego. But in reality—which nobody likes—Ted Giannoulias from London, Ontario, Canada.

Nardwuar: You are the Famous Chicken!

Chicken: Yes, of course! The one and only San Diego Famous Chicken. Whoo! Can you believe it? It's better than getting a real job, Nardy.

Nardwuar: Now, Famous Chicken, does it go all the way back to Harpo Marx? [Nardwuar pulls out a Harpo Marx record.]

Chicken: [Kissing noises] I gotta tell ya, this guy was the San Diego Chicken without a beak back in the day. This guy was a real inspiration for me, I must say.

Nardwuar: I have a quote here: "The Famous Chicken story is classic Americana."

Chicken: Well, yes, but the roots are in London, Ontario, where I started off. All I did, Nardwuar, was take my Canadian schoolboy humor and market it at an American sports event and voila, here I am, Chicken A La King!

Nardwuar: It's not an easy life being the San Diego Chicken is it, Famous Chicken?

Chicken: Oh, no. I guess not. You've got to cross a lot of roads and keep your head up and look both sides of your beak. But I gotta tell ya, it's fun. It adds a lot of frivolity when I do various sporting events and, best of all Nardy, it's better than getting a real job.

Nardwuar: It's like being in a band! You're on the road, on the road. You're in a band! You're working it.

Chicken: That's a good point. And rather than playing bass or getting on the drums, I guess you're out there cavorting for a few laughs. But you're right. You play to an audience every night. You gotta love what you do. You create on the spot as well. And you gotta rehearse a little bit. You're absolutely right. The only thing... I don't have groupies, though.

Nardwuar: Well, you might have had groupies when you MC'ed for the Ramones. What can you say about working with the Ramones?

Chicken: Oooohhh! How did you know that? Nardy! You know your stuff, buddy. Yes, I did MC a Ramones concert. And

you're right; I actually met some goth chicks. They were very cool. But I've also been on stage with many bands. George Thorogood, J. Geils Band—I'm dating myself a little bit. But I even stopped Elvis cold one night, to tell you how far back I go. I stopped him cold in laughter one night in the middle of a show.

Nardwuar: What were you doing at an Elvis show? You go from Elvis, to now. That's incredible, Famous Chicken.

Chicken: Nardwuar, the chicken is everywhere. Y'know, I was there, believe it or not, because he was visiting San Diego. I had to take in an Elvis show. This was about a year before he passed away. And I was goofing in the grandstands and down the aisles while he was singing. And he doubled over in laughter, stopped the show, could not continue, apologized to the audience and then told everybody, "I gotta remind the chicken, my manager's name is The Colonel." Ahhhh!

Nardwuar: Elvis! The Famous Chicken! How about Alice Cooper?

Chicken: Oh, I never met Alice.

Nardwuar: Because he has a chicken incident, doesn't he? What can you say about that, Famous Chicken?

Chicken: It's very interesting. I did not know that chicken, I must say. But whatever he did, I must say it helped eliminate my competition, at least for one night.

Nardwuar: Ba-boom! You brought rock'n'roll to baseball, didn't you? You brought it?

Chicken: That's true.

Nardwuar: Nobody had done that before, had they?

Chicken: And here's the reason why, Nardwuar. I started off with a rock'n'roll radio station back in the '70s. So I did a lot of things that were off the wall, unprecedented, and unheard of. And it just manifested itself, so to speak. I can't believe a chicken just said the word "manifested." But, anyway, it just kind of snowballed in effect and it really took off. So I brought recorded music to live stadium events because of my background and roots in rock'n'roll with a radio station in San Diego.

Nardwuar: You, the same person that's in this suit now, was in the same suit back then.

Chicken: Yes. Oh, yes. I'm not a franchise. I'm not a department store Santa Claus. I'm one of a kind, just like you are, Nardwuar.

Nardwuar: Famous Chicken, you also integrate Devo into your act. You've got some Devo in there. "Whip It."

Chicken: Oh yes, I'm a big Devo-tee, you might say. And one of the things I do is I bring out a rubber mannequin dressed up as an umpire or a referee and I basically bang him around. It's a wrestling match that I win thanks to "Whip It." And so I took the music from "Whip It" and merged it with this unique act that I thought of that was inspired by the music, and, really, it's been a Chicken signature for many years.

Nardwuar: And, Famous Chicken, do you have bubblegum? Is there bubblegum?

Chicken: There was a time when there was bubblegum and it was made by the Wrigley Corporation back in the '80s. And it was a short-lived thing. And a lot of people, a lot of collectors, bought it. But the kids wouldn't buy it because they thought it might taste like chicken, when in fact it was just chicken bubblegum in my likeness in terms of form.

Nardwuar: Famous Chicken, in 1998 you said that you played to over sixty million people in your career. Now it's 2008. Looking at all the stadiums you've covered, how many people have you played to? How many millions?

Chicken: Well, I've got to say, it's more than seventy million people in live attendance, believe it or not, Nardwuar. I've even grand marshaled Mardi Gras parades; I've done World Series events, all-star games... I've gone around the world: eight countries, four continents, performed wherever a laugh is appreciated. Heck, Nardwuar, if you know me, I'll even play to an elevator if I have to.

Nardwuar: Seventy million people have watched the Famous Chicken. Who else has been watched by that many people in the history of people?

Chicken: Oh, thank you. That's a good question. And I thought about this. Maybe The Rolling Stones, obviously. I think they've played to about one or two percent of the entire world's population. I gotta say, probably Bob Hope when he was alive by virtue of all the USO shows he did for the troops, during all the war



MITCH CLEM

What's the deal on the Phillie Phanatic, though? He has a hot dog launcher. Do you think that put him to #1, having a hot dog launcher?

years as well. Probably Willie Nelson, who's still going...

Nardwuar: And the Famous Chicken!

Chicken: Of course! Can you believe it? And I don't even have a big band behind me. I'm just one of a kind, waddling around the globe.

Nardwuar: Now, Famous Chicken, you're #1 to me.

Chicken: Thank you!

Nardwuar: However, *Forbes Magazine* has you as the #2 mascot of all time. Phillie Phanatic is #1. How come?

Chicken: Yep, because they're bean counters. They don't understand what's going on in the real world. Things like that happen, Nardwuar. It's like them ranking bands. They'd be the last people you'd go "Oh, I wonder who *Forbes Magazine* thinks is the best band in the world right now?"

Nardwuar: What's the deal on the Phillie Phanatic, though? He has a hot dog launcher. Do you think that put him to #1, having a hot dog launcher?

Chicken: No, no. It's because they're back East and it's the media centre of the capital of the world back there. And if it's in their

neighborhood, then everything else must revolve around it. When you live out in California, you don't get that kind of attention. That's just the way it is. I don't worry about those things myself, y'know. The fact of the matter is I don't see the Phillie Phanatic in Vancouver! Whooo!

Nardwuar: Yeahhh! Famous Chicken, I would like to ask you about someone who is really famous. Famous Chicken, I hugged you, but you've been kissed by Morganna the Kissing....

Chicken: Bandit! Oh yes, absolutely!

Nardwuar: Who is Morganna the Kissing Bandit? And is she the competition?

Chicken: Well, y'know, back in the day she was a very voluptuous—to put it politely—a very voluptuous young lady who had a tendency to go on to the baseball diamonds and hockey rinks and basketball courts and kiss athletes during the timeout breaks right on their peckers. Or, er, for me at least. And I gotta tell ya, she ganged up on me one night, unbeknownst to me, and laid a big one right on me and it was a tremendous thrill, I must say. But she did a lot of hall

of famers... uh, kissed a lot of hall of famers shall I say, back in her day and she had quite a cult following.

Nardwuar: Famous Chicken, we have hockey. Joe Louis Arena.

Chicken: I've played a lot of venues in the NHL and throughout the minor leagues in hockey, and I enjoy it. Believe it or not, my position growing up in hockey when I was a kid in Canada, I played goalie. So you might say a chicken is good in a cage.

Nardwuar: You're quite mean sometimes aren't you Famous Chicken?

Chicken: Mean? In what regard?

Nardwuar: You're mean to dinosaurs!

Chicken: Ohhhh! [laughs] My friend, you are doing your homework! Yes! You might say that. There's a certain purple dinosaur that I, well, I can't explain it. Here I am doing my show and the guy shows up. And he's obviously jealous of all the attention I'm getting and he challenges me right then and there in the middle of the diamond to a dance contest. Well, then he starts break dancing and kind of shows me up and complications ensue and a slap fight begins and, hey, I had to put him down.

KISSOFDEATH

STILL PUTTING OUT RAD RECORDS FOR RAD BANDS

BANNER PILOT
CHILLERTON
CLOSET FAIRIES
CUTMAN
DELAY
GET BENT
GUILTMAKER
GATORFACE
JEAN CLAUDE JAM BAND
THE KNOCKDOWN
THE MEASURE (SA)
MONIKERS
MOUTHBREATHER
NEW BRUISES
NORTH LINCOLN
O PIONEERS
PARTY GARBAGE
RAD HORSES
THE SHAKING HANDS
THE SERIOUS GENIUSES
VIRGINS



Nardwuar: You had the last word. You always have the last word.

Chicken: I gotta put 'em down. In fact, true story here Nardwuar. The guy actually sued me. The Barney people actually sued me to try and stop me from doing that routine and they lost that lawsuit and they also had to pay all my legal bills. So that was pretty cool.

Nardwuar: Take that, Barney!

he didn't appreciate, like untying his shoelaces when he was in the corner, or tripping him by the ankles when he wasn't looking. And he got so fed up, Nardwuar, he actually jumped the ropes and started chasing me through the arena and he was disqualified. He was counted out. So I kinda helped Jerry Lawler win that wrestling match against him.

[Nardwuar pulls out a copy of *Razorcake*] but he just sets up and plays his drums. The Rhythm Chicken.

Chicken: Wow. I remember a few years ago Burger King had a character that was like, you could say, a "punk" chicken. That was a little fascinating. But I did not know about the Rhythm Chicken. That is very cool.

Nardwuar: Have you heard of the Rhythm Chicken? [Nardwuar shows a picture of The Rhythm Chicken]



Chicken: No. No. In fact,
that looks like a bunny.

Chicken: How do you like me now, dinosaur guy?!

Nardwuar: Famous Chicken, how do you keep so clean? Here we are at a baseball diamond with all this dirt'n'stuff.

Chicken: Well, I just took a bird bath, Nardwuar. So I'll be ready for the game tonight.

Nardwuar: Because your outfit is impeccable!

Chicken: Ohhh! It is impeccable! I like that one! I'm stealing that one. That's a good one! I like it! [kisses Nardwuar].

Nardwuar: Thank you so much Famous Chicken. I guess that's what I was curious about. Cleaning and stuff. Do you get to go into the showers with A-Rod? Do you get to clean up?

Chicken: [laughs] I don't like to go in there too much because they kind of get jealous of me, they kind of peek at my McNuggets. It's a real buzzkill there in the shower. I wait for the boys to be done, and then I go in there.

Nardwuar: What about yourself? Have you ever been unmasked? Has anyone ever tried to get an unauthorized photo of the Famous Chicken?

Chicken: Oh, no. That's no fun. That's like pulling down Santa's beard or seeing who Batman really is. Nobody wants that. For heaven's sake, that's real life. We're just trying to have a little fun here.

Nardwuar: You have let people, Famous Chicken, into your suit? You let Pete Rose into your suit.

Chicken: Yes, absolutely. Pete Rose actually got into my suit for WrestleMania. He actually stole it right out of my locker. He went out into the ring. He tried to disguise himself as me and then he ended up getting bodyslammed. Served him right, I gotta say.

Nardwuar: Did you have to wrestle Jesse "The Body" Ventura?

Chicken: Yes, I did, my friend. Good, that's right. It was at a wrestling match—I was in the corner for Jerry "The King" Lawler, and Jesse "The Body" Ventura was the wrestler and I did stuff that

Nardwuar: What do the players think of you? What's your interaction? Like, are they always down with it? What players don't have a good time and what players have had a good time with the Famous Chicken?

Chicken: You'd be surprised, Nardwuar. A lot of the players actually think of the gags and routines for me. They do have a good sense of humor. And when you play 162 games, and a guy in a chicken suit shows up, believe me, it tends to break the monotony for them, they tell me. So they've come up with gags and routines for me as well. But of the guys who didn't appreciate it, one of them was Frank Thomas, who's now in the twilight of his career.

Nardwuar: What did he find offense with?

Chicken: Oh, just my showing up. He just thought that I would be goofing in and around with him, something that he really didn't want. It was nothing personal. I had nothing planned with him, but he'd make a scene in the locker room, thinking I was going to approach him, but I'm really talking to his teammates. Things like that. Can I say... I know there was a lot of steroid use in those days, back a few years ago, and I'm not pointing or castigating anybody, but I'm just wondering what's true and what's 'roid rage sometimes?

Nardwuar: What other chickens are there?

Chicken: To my knowledge, I'm the only one in existence.

Nardwuar: Let me offer up another chicken, for you, Famous Chicken. We have here, the Rhythm Chicken. Have you heard of the Rhythm Chicken? [Nardwuar shows a picture of The Rhythm Chicken]

Chicken: No. No. In fact, that looks like a bunny.

Nardwuar: That's the whole gag. He dresses like a bunny, but he calls himself the Rhythm Chicken.

Chicken: Oh, okay.

Nardwuar: And he plays at Brewers games.

Chicken: I did not know that.

Nardwuar: He's a columnist for this esteemed magazine, *Razorcake*,

Nardwuar: The Rhythm Chicken. Have you done much stuff with the Brewers, the Milwaukee Brewers?

Chicken: No. I've been into Milwaukee for the Bucks of the NBA and for their minor league hockey team known as the Admirals, but I've never been in there for the Brewers. Although I did a cameo appearance many years ago just for an inning break. But they've never had me on officially as a marquee event.

Nardwuar: You should team up with the Rhythm Chicken. I think that would be amazing, the Rhythm Chicken and the Famous Chicken. He'd bring his drums. You'd have a great time.

Chicken: That would be really great. I bet he handles those skins pretty good. I'll have to check it out.

Nardwuar: He is a totally professional drummer just like you are a totally professional individual, Mister Famous Chicken.

Chicken: That is very cool. I did not know about that there, Nardwuar.

Nardwuar: Famous Chicken, lastly here, you've also played the Grand Ol' Opry?

Chicken: Wow, man. I gotta tell you, Nardwuar, you are doing your homework. Yes, I was onstage at the Grand Ol' Opry and I did "Whole Lotta Shakin' Goin' On" to chicken lyrics. Or you might just say clucking, a lot of clucking around. But it was in front of 5,000 people there, on a live broadcast. Really, I got to tell ya, I felt what it was like to be Mick Jagger strutting around like a rooster.

Nardwuar: Well, thanks so much for your time Famous Chicken. Keep on rockin' in the free world, and doot doola doot doo...

Chicken: Whoop, woo, wouda, woop, woop, woo, yeah!

To hear this interview hop to
www.nardwuar.com

**"It's just
that 5 is a
Fibonacci
number."**

POWER POP POLICE

REV. NORB

22 OR NOT 22?

or TEXT US, TEXT US, KILL KILL KILL

"He who fucks nuns will later join the church" said Joe Strummer, which i like to think means something like "the people who talk the most about their alleged incorruptibility are the ones most likely to be corrupted" ((but admit may mean something completely different, like "got two bob for potato croquettes then?" or similar)). One would think that, bolstered by this sage advice, I'd tend to avoid making sweeping proclamations of how much doing this that or the other thing sucks, and how I'm never gonna do said thing in my life, just to avoid looking like a douche when I wind up capitulating and doing whatever it was I so loudly said I'd never do, but, yet, goddammit, I find that I STILL STAND OPPOSED TO ALL THAT I HAVE NEVER EVER DONE ONCE IN MY LIFE, ON THE GROUNDS THAT, AS EVINCED BY MY NOT HAVING DONE IT YET, IT OBVIOUSLY SUCKS ((except for fivesomes. I'm open to fivesomes. I have no prurient interest in such dealings, of course – It's just that 5 is a Fibonacci number [[you know, 1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13, 21, 34 etc. – you add the last two numbers of the sequence together to create the next number]], and I believe that the Fibonacci Numbers are some manner of mathematical blueprint which determine what the optimal combinations of participants in group sex should be. All non-Fibonacci numbers of participants – 4, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, etc. – should be avoided like the plague, lest your next madcap holiday orgy come off as a bit of a dud. All zany group sex scenarios should always include a Fibonacci number of participants, with the male/female ratio determined by the preceding two Fibonacci numbers, the larger determining the number of female participants, and the smaller determining the males. So, if you have an eightsome, it should be five girls and three guys. A threesome should be eight girls and five guys. A fivesome should be three girls and two guys. A sixsome is right out. You'll also notice that there are a few 1's in the Fibonacci Sequence. This is because if you're the type of person that sits around the house dreaming up ways to connect Fibonacci numbers with group sex, you're probably gonna spend a lot of time having sex by yourself, BUT I SPEAK OF HARMONY, PROPORTION, AND OTHER MATHEMATICAL NUANCES OF WHICH YOU LEERING BRUTES WILL NEVER TRULY COMPREHEND, so fuck

off and go fetch my Quisp™ flavored personal lubricant, underclassman!)) – which is what makes it so doubly tragic that I, Rev. Norb, have once again strayed from the path of righteousness, and joined another metaphorical church ((or perhaps fucked another metaphorical nun. I really don't understand the metaphor, though that does not impinge upon my ability to quote it repeatedly)): I have now actually SENT AND RECEIVED TEXT MESSAGES. From a CELL PHONE. That, my friends, is a mighty portly nun to service. I mean, *text messaging*??? Who the FUCK invented this shit??? It's slow, it's tedious, and it's distracting. It's like one rung up the evolutionary ladder from the telegraph, except it makes you inattentive and crash commuter trains and shit. IMing kind of makes sense: You fling out your message, and the person you've flung it to responds at their leisure. Texting makes NO sense whatsoever, unless you're a middle school student and you're secretly texting subversive messages about Beavis, Glade™, and Mr. Bill® to your buddies across the classroom. It takes like four days to compose a ten-word message, which you then send to someone whose phone number, by definition, you already have! I mean, couldn't I just CALL somebody and ask them "are you going to the party?" instead of texting "2, arrow, 7, 7, 7, arrow, 3, 3, arrow, 1, arrow, 9, 9, 9, arrow, 6, 6, 6, arrow, 8, 8, arrow, 1, arrow, 4, arrow, 6, 6, 6, arrow, 4, 4, arrow, 6, 6, arrow, 4, arrow, 1, arrow, 8, arrow, 6, 6, 6, arrow, 1, arrow, 8, arrow, 4, 4, arrow, 3, 3, arrow, 1, arrow, 7, arrow, 2, arrow, 7, 7, 7, arrow, 8, arrow, 9, 9, 9, arrow, 1, arrow, 1, 1, 1"? ((note to self: Next time I want to run an experiment to see if Tim Yohannan can actually spin in his grave, I'm writing an entire column like the last line)). Now, like any good trip to the dark side, my introduction to texting was instigated by a female. Clueless as to the location of a post-roller derby after party, a skater offered to "text" the address to me. I stared at her blankly, as is right and just. "Text" is a verb? Hah? She then requested that i hand over my phone, which i did with a child-like innocence. In a matter of seconds, she had not only texted me, but had unearthed a veritable mountain of heretofore undiscovered texts that had been sitting on my phone for months. An hour later, i was back at my hotel room, s-l-o-w-l-y a-n-d l-a-b-o-r-i-o-

u-s-l-y t-e-x-t-i-n-g r-e-s-p-o-n-s-e-s to everyone who had texted me in my lifetime. It was amusing at first, for the sheer, giddy, continental-drift-paced novelty of it all, but, as my slow-mo mudslide of texts plodded on, i found that the one line i still could not cross was the use of the numeral "2" as a substitute for "to" or "too." I absolutely CAN NOT bring myself to use "2" or "4" or "U" in a text message, even thought it's completely logical, appropriate, and saves time. **SIR, I OUTRIGHT REJECT THE CONCEPT OF SERVICING THIS PARTICULAR NUN!** Which is odd, because when I did my fanzine *SiCK TEEN* in the early 80's, I would ALWAYS use "2" and "4" and "U" when I wrote. I mean, fucking ALWAYS. My proudest moment as a "rock critic" IN MY LIFETIME was when Twin/Tone™ Records quoted me as saying "**U MUST CZECH OUT THE REPLACEMENTS 'HOOTENANNY' ALBUM!**" in the print ads for that record -- using "2" and "4" and "U" looked cool, seemed punk, and saved time and space. Now it makes ya look like some dildo who watches *The Suite Life of Zach & Cody* and eats Go-Gurt® – but it does still save time and space. AND, in the painfully laborious context of texting, **IT MAKES PERFECT FUCKING SENSE TO USE "2" INSTEAD OF "TO" AND "TOO."** And yet – and yet – I can't bring myself to do it. Somehow, The Kids – **THOSE GODDAMN KIDS™!** – have taken my 2 and my 4 and my U from me – **THE SAME 2 AND 4 AND U I WAS USING IN 1982, GODDAMMIT!** – And have made me feel shame every time I try to utilize them. When texting, I will TYPE the "2" in there – then back up, erase the "2", then replace it with "8, arrow, 6, 6, 6" to spell out "to" and avoid giving off the lame-o vibe that those old guys who used to come to shows with cotton in their ears gave off when I was in high school. Then, of course, I think "**FUCK YOU, GODDAMN KIDS!!! IT'S MY 2! MY 4! MY U!**" ((*"My 4!!! You're one of them!!!"*)) and I erase "to" and put the 2 back there, then it looks stupid, then I replace it again. And feel dirty doing so. *I feel dirty both ways!* ((Which is odd, because I don't feel dirty at all about the fivesomes)). So, against this angst-infused backdrop, I find myself at the post-national-roller-derby-championship after party, which features the feebly troubling phenomenon of "live band karaoke." Essentially, some poor

Minions of Rock™ learn a shitload of songs, then perform them for the benefit of an endless parade of guest vocalists and their legions of drunken, spectacle-hungry cohorts ((lacking Roger Miller's "Dang Me" in their repertoire, I opted not to partake)). After a few hours of drunken roller girls singing immaculately mangled Journey covers, Punk Rock Phil, coach of the Texas Rollergirls, comes up on stage to sing "Bloodstains" by Agent Orange ((I had Punk Rock Phil vetted. He is, in fact, punk rock)). Being vaguely hippieish, I'm slightly surprised the band knows this song, but, they churn into both chords with reasonable abandon, much to the delight of the scores of shiftfaced Rollergirls from across the continent. Phil belts out the lyrics with admirable gusto, but damages his integrity by doing the scream after every chorus, not just the chorus right before the solo ((that the Offspring got sued for ripping off)). I'm not much for the value of karaoke in ANY context, but it starts to get cool: Sparkle Plenty, one of the original Rollergirls who spearheaded the sport's modern-day revival, is dancing across the stage in a drunken stupor. Sparkle is totally cool — she's tall, smart, good looking, funny, and skates a half-pipe in her backyard. At this point in time, however, Sparkle is absolutely out of her mind drunk, kicking over music stands like a six foot tall Patti Smith with ADD. Sparkle boots a stand into the metaphorical cheap seats, then concludes this brief performance by falling off the stage herself, gashing her chin as she makes gravity's stern acquaintance. The bandleader — hippily attired in white slacks and a matching white ice cream man hat — is mortified by the sight of some crazy chick booting over music stands during "Bloodstains." He angrily signals the band to stop playing, then berates the crowd, explaining that the band is "working hard" for our pleasure, and that we have to show them love and respect, because, dammit, shit is getting all fucked up, and somebody spilled a drink on his effects pedal, and we just can't DO that. The crowd — a sea of wasted Roller girls and a few weird statistical outlier dudes like me — ushers in the Obama era by responding with "**YES! WE! CAN!!! YES! WE! CAN!!!**" It is, as of 1:17AM CST 12.04.08, the defining moment of the Obama Presidency. The hippie ice cream man is beside himself with righteous indignation. Furious, he threatens us with "Stairway to Heaven." The crowd keeps chanting "**YES! WE! CAN!!!**" It is the punkest sequence of events I've seen in years. The band launches into "Stairway," but, at this point, nobody cares. **DO YOUR WORST, ICE CREAM MAN.** It is an epochal experience; a turning point of some sort; a triumphant resurgence of the goofiest cultural nature. Being a tuned-in cat and prophet of note, I am compelled to share the experience with others — to reach out, to connect, to convey every precious detail and nuance of this life affirming ruckus, to boldly tune the rest of the globe in to this vital and electrifyin' cultural happenstance!

So I pull out my cell phone: "9, 9, 9, arrow, 6, 6, arrow, 8, 8, arrow, 1, arrow..."
Love,
6, 6, arrow, 6, 6, 6, arrow, 7, 7, 7, arrow, 2, 2

Text messaging? It's like one rung up the evolutionary ladder from the telegraph,



RYAN GELATIN

except it makes you inattentive and crash commuter trains and shit.



"We want music videos, not a psychology experiment!"

CHANNELING DEATH

In the year 2009, we shall have a new political body. I understand that their hands will be full with the world's problems, but I would like to see them put television programming on the endangered species list. I believe this is necessary after one rough week of crap. First, were *The American Music Awards*. It's bad enough when the music powers shove so-called pop bands up our ass, but when it's the Pussycat Dolls, where are bands that actually write their own music and play their own instruments? The other big disappointment of the week was *Dancing with the Stars* three-hour bullshit bonanza. Just give the winner that disco nut trophy and get it over with.

It wasn't too long ago that my wife and I joked that we were giving the kiss of death to the sitcoms we enjoyed tuning into. If we liked it, the networks would instantly drop the show. It started with a show called *Cupid*, which starred Jeremy Piven as the real cupid, entertaining people in a support group. Then there was *The Andy Richter Show* and *Grounded for Life*, shows that had short shelf lives. There was a lull while all the reality shows filled the tube. But just recently the kiss of death reappeared, when it was announced in the newspaper that *Pushing Daisies* and *Eli Stone* were being cancelled.

Why has the American sitcom found the way of the dodo in favor of reality (if one can call it that) shows or the toilet flush known as Harvey Levin's *TMZ* (which is a whole other article to complain about)? Is money so tight that they can't pay actors, so they get some weirdo off the street who has no problem embarrassing themselves?

I would also like to know why shows need to be repeated half way through the season when they have new episodes ready. I found this with *Lost*, which one has to pay close attention to anyway. Then there is a rerun or two thrown in the middle and the show loses its flow. It's no wonder that people lose interest in a show when this happens, and that's on shows that build suspense over an entire season. This also happens with the half hour comedies. Once they do a rerun, I switch channels; I lose interest.

Right now, I watch all Monday night and a half hour on Thursday religiously, and I'm hoping none of those shows get cut. My other concern is why at ten o'clock does all television turn to crime shows? I know it

isn't for adult content, because *Two and a Half Men* is on at seven and that show has all the sexual content one needs to become a young pimp. I could make it into late night talk shows if I had some ten PM comedy sitcoms, but, instead, I fall asleep.

When I was a kid, all we did was watch sitcoms and they lasted season after season. Take *Cheers*, for example. How many years did that get put out? How about *Happy Days*, *Laverne and Shirley*, and *Hogan's Heroes*? Which one of these shows only lasted a season? That's what I thought. None of them did, and they lasted a good, long time.

I realize that cable's available now, but I'm not about to pay money for programs I just won't be able to watch. Hell, even the stuff on cable gets screwed up. Just look at what has happened to MTV. MTV used to be cutting edge. It presented us with music that was new and different. Then it started giving us nothing but rap and reality shows. Who watches music television to see how people get along when they are all thrown in a house together? We want music videos, not a psychology experiment! This is how all television loses viewers. They give something new then they break it by adding some nonsense, or they take it to a different night, or they force us to watch reruns so that we lose interest. It seems that the networks have mastered a formula for disaster. It seems to work on everything I like. So, if there is something you like on TV, don't tell me about it. Because if I latch on to it, it is sure to be cursed with the Hornberger kiss of death.

BOY'S CLUB 2

By Matt Furie, \$4.95 U.S.

The only way I can describe *Boy's Club*, is that it is foul-mouthed Sesame Street in a drug-filled culture. There are four characters: one looks like a dog, another a frog, a hairy bird with no eyes, and, well, I'm not real sure about the fourth, because he's somewhere between the frog and the dog in looks. Mostly, what goes on in the pages of this book is bathroom humor, smoking dope, and practical jokes. It seems that these characters speak in some sort of cool urban lingo. I will say there is one disturbing panel, when we see the bird with no eyes taking a shower. I just can't understand why this creature has bare skin from the

buttocks to the neck and hair, fur, or feathers everywhere else, yet no eyes. And he has human genitals. This comic is like one, big high school nonsense joke. Very confused on the point of this one. (Buenaventura Press, PO Box 23661 Oakland, CA 94623, www.buenaventurapress.com)

NIGHTLIGHT COMICS

BUZZPOP / DROP DEAD DUMB

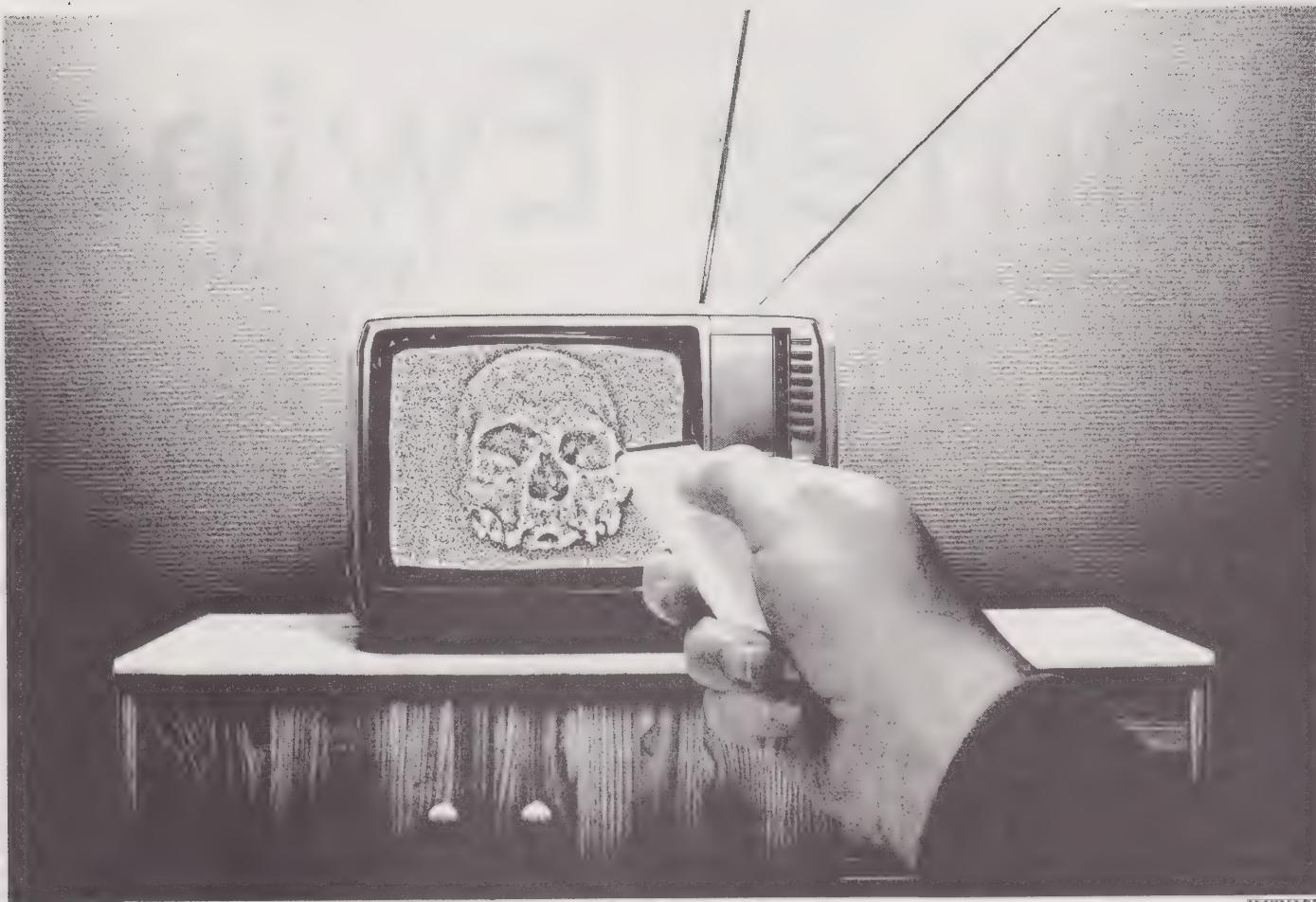
By Travist/ Chic, \$3.00 U.S.

This is one of those comics that save space by being a two-in-one. When you're done reading the first comic, turn it upside down and go to the back page and start reading the next comic. I like them both for different reasons. I'll start with *Drop Dead Dumb*. This one is drawn very sharp and is a collection of three stories. The best story is the biography of a band called Alabama Jihad. The only problem is that the lettering is so damn small you'll have crossed eyes and a headache when you're done. On to *Buzzpop*. This one is more of an action comic with superheroes, drawn crisply yet with more flow. This one's about a girl and her indestructible guitar, which she uses to subdue purse snatchers, as well as use in her band. These two work well together. Kind of makes one feel like they get something extra for nothing. (*Drop Dead Dumb*, 2214 Beasley Ave., NW Huntsville, AL 35816, Night Light Comics, PO Box 511788, Milwaukee, WI 53203, wwwnightlightcomics.com)

RUNX TALES #1

By Matt Runkle, \$?

This is new for me. I had never read a comic that is purely homosexual in content. I guess I should have paid more attention to the cover with the "Abba expose" and "The Gayness of Marriage" titles. The "Gayness of Marriage" is pretty funny, with the consideration that a wedding really has many gay qualities to it, though I'm not sure only a gay person can pull one off. *Runx Tales*, I will have to admit, is interesting—if not different—reading for myself, yet it does tend to get boring toward the end. It does, however, give an interesting view on something I've never really put into my head. It's sort of a romp in someone else's skin. (runkle.matt@gmail.com)



MAYNARD

IS money so tight that they get some weirdo off the Street who has no problem embarrassing themselves?

THE WORK OF A YOUNG, UNFED AND UNKNOWN CARTOONIST

By Noah Van Sciver, \$1.00 or a coffee

I must start by saying that after reading this comic, I have no desire to travel to Denver and ride on one of their buses. Granted, any bus ride where a guy offers me Doritos out of a big bag for a buck a handful must be going to a fiery demise. I really liked this comic because this guy really likes to complain and has no problem making fun of himself. Take, for example, the ad he puts in to have sex with him, which includes such benefits as, "gaining a skeleton in your closet" or "brushing up on your acting skills." What girl wouldn't take a chance on that, if not only for the comedic value? This little book is full of cynicism and is a romp in the park of, "what could happen next?" Although I had to strain my eyes to read it, it was well worth the effort. My eyes seem to be a reoccurring problem. I better get them checked out. (N Van Sciver, 1165 Grant St. #307, Denver, CO 80203, noahvansciver.com)

MORE WORK FROM AN UNKNOWN CARTOONIST

By Noah Van Sciver, \$2.00 U.S.

More tales of anger, hate, and what the hell! This is the follow up to Mr. Van Sciver's first down-trodden, hilarious comic work. I enjoyed the title "My Job Application," where every job he takes, he has to clean the restroom, and every time someone has left him a present somewhere besides the toilet. Unfortunately, this seems to be astonishingly true in public restrooms. The contents of this book contain more tales of woe and confusion for the characters (usually Noah). Once more, I tip my hat to you Mr. Van Sciver. Good job! (Noah Van Sciver, 1165 Grant St. #307, Denver, CO 80203, noahvs@comcast.net)

SLAP IN THE FACE: MY OBSESSION WITH GG ALLIN

By Justin Melkman, \$3.00 U.S.

This one hits home for so many reasons. Mainly, how can anyone have an obsession with GG Allin? It wasn't too long ago in

my early punk days that the group of guys I ran with had this joke of giving this one GG Allin album to whoever was next in line to have a birthday. I never received this album, yet it seemed that the real reason was that it was horrible to listen to while it absolved the person of getting a decent present for the birthday boy. With that said, look at the guy's videos: spitting, shitting, and bleeding at his concerts for everybody to share. That doesn't sound like a lot of fun to me. So when I started reading this, I held many doubts. Fortunately for this writer, this is a very interesting historical look at someone who put a fingerprint on punk. It is a look from a fan's point of view, which gives this some feeling of normality while exploring a man who was far from normal. This was an enjoyable read and a keeper for those who enjoy punk history.

(jmelkmann@hotmail.com,
www.melkmanncomics.blogspot.com,
www.myspace.com/worldwarix,
Commixpress, www.comixpress.com)

-Gary



RAZORCAKE 33

James Ewing

1983-2008

Compiled by Lauren Measure and Maddy Tight Pants

ON THE MORNING OF NOVEMBER 5TH, Jamie Ewing, best known as the singer/guitarist of the Brooklyn band Bent Outta Shape, passed away in his sleep.

He was twenty-five years old and is survived by his parents, brother, and sister. A native of Long Island and a long-time Brooklyn resident, Jamie was a much loved member of the punk community and played more recently in bands such as the Young Men and the Radio Faces. He was known as the scrappy kid in the plaid shirt—always cracking a joke—with an amazing talent for songwriting. Jamie was a character. He stood out from the crowd as an incredibly talented, extremely friendly, and always helpful guy. Anyone who knew him undoubtedly had a funny story about Jamie and he never ceased to amaze those around him with his late night antics and an amazing sense of humor. Music was a huge part of his life—from touring, to playing in Brooklyn, to making cassette demos for friends—Jamie was always working on something. Even his “business” card, advertising his Man With A Van services sported the tagline “I’ll never be your beast of burden.” His trademark drawing style could be seen on countless flyers and record covers, leaving his mark everywhere.

The band Bent Outta Shape existed from roughly 2002 to 2006 and released an EP, two split 7”s and a full-length LP. They toured the U.S. and were hailed with bands like Drunken Boat, Snuggle, and Ringers as a new wave of honest, underground punk. Drawing from Replacements-style rock’n’roll and basement punk rock, Jamie sang heartfelt and poetic lyrics over the twang of his guitar leads. The band inspired fans across the country. Their last show in Brooklyn in 2006 felt like the end of an era. Now, with his passing, it feels that way even more.

We love you, Jamie, and hope there are no more Rudes and Cheaps where you are now.

EVERYONE HAD A DIFFERENT RELATIONSHIP WITH JAMIE. Some only knew him through his songs, his occasional visits through town, through a letter with some fucked-up drawing on it, or from a barrage of late-night phone calls with him just looking for company. We all lost something different, but we all share a loss.

We talk a good game about certain values we all want in our lives: honesty, loyalty, and righteousness. When life hands you these things in a person, it can be hard to recognize.

But we had these qualities in Jimbo, and I think we all knew it. I think we knew we were around greatness, and even better, it was a greatness that wanted us around. Desperately. He just wanted us around.

When I was younger, growing up on Long Island, Jamie was “little Jamie” and he followed me around at a ska show one night. After a few years, he moved to Brooklyn, and from that point on, I followed him. I looked up to him because he made me believe in things again. He wasn’t afraid. There was fearlessness in his writing and his life. Doubts and longing, sure. But those just made his efforts that much more real. Watching him play guitar and share his yearning, his love, and desperation, I just wanted to be around. I wanted to glean some of that honesty for myself. We all did. And he gave it to us in so many ways. We miss him because we loved him, but we also miss how much he loved us. He gave us so much of himself. If you were his friend, then it was settled. He would be loyal to you forever and he’d give you what he had. It was the substance of all the right politics with none of the blather. And I don’t want to canonize him, for I find little comfort in the eulogies that sound like a saint we didn’t know. He was no saint. We knew that.

A lot of the stories of Jimbo are of his jokes, his playfulness, him being a crazy person. And he was. To me, those things were always part of him wanting things to be different. Every situation could be better, even if it was by just laughing at it. Sort of like, “If we’re laughing, and we’re together then we haven’t given up.” He gave us that too. To look at this little man and think “provider” seems crazy, but he was. He provided us with so much. Now we’re left with recordings, stories, and an ache. Small comforts. Clichés. When I saw friends this past weekend, I kept having the running feeling of, “I wouldn’t know them without him. We wouldn’t have given each other a chance without him.” He brought us together. Now we’re left with each other.

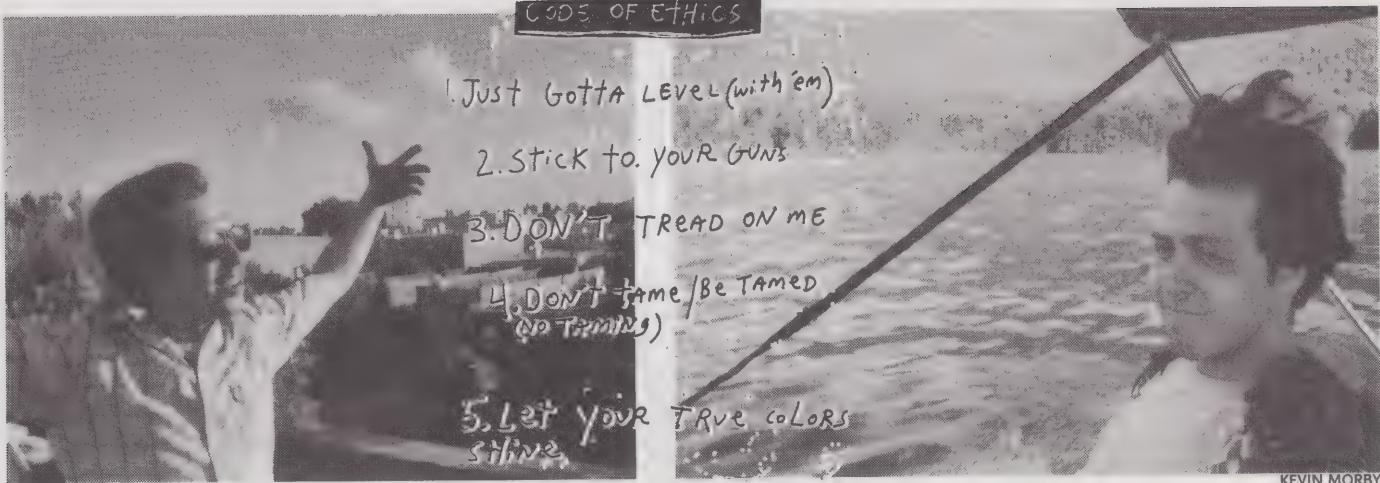
Whether you knew him closely or just knew him from his music, the truth is the same: he made you feel alright. He made you feel welcome. Welcome to wish the city would burn. That it was okay to sometimes feel like you owned the streets. He told you that you put up a good fight. And you believed him. And you believed in him.

The only person I knew who could really make the old things seem new is gone. He put up a good fight.
—Justin Sullivan

I’LL SKIP THE EPIC HISTORY. I’ve known Jimbo for a long, long time; through good times and bad, and I wouldn’t trade any of it for anything. Here’s my story. There’s a lot of friendly bullshit said between people in bands who’ve met on the road and become friends. “Let’s do a split 7”!” “Let’s tour together!” “Hey, when I get a chance, I’ll move out East and we’ll start a band.” Rarely does any of this actually happen. But I felt such a bond with Jimbo that when the opportunity arose, I packed up my car and drove from Milwaukee to Brooklyn over the course of a snowy February night in 2007. I’ve never met anyone like him, so talented and easy to work with, yet such a perfectionist. We could spend half an hour on one line. He felt that lyrics really needed to mean something, not pretentious meaning, but that no word or line could be wasted. We were the Radio Faces. Writing, practicing, and recording our Radio Faces album was awesome! We’d scream like Howard Dean, we’d jump up and do the splits like clowns. Mikey, Sully, Jimbo, and me. Our shows were cool, but what I’ll remember most is sitting in his bedroom, writing the songs. Jimbo and I were very close. We shared so much, and there’s a hole in my heart right now that doesn’t look like it’s gonna go away anytime soon. But moping all the time doesn’t help. So, I’ll play his records LOUD, and always keep his memory and love for life alive. Feel free to join me!

—Nato Coles

MUSICALLY, JAMIE WAS IN A LEAGUE OF HIS OWN. His cassette demos are some of the best things I’ll ever hear. Any band he was in was just phenomenal. I remember standing inches in front of him at Bent House one of the first times I saw the Young Men, almost crying because I was so proud of what amazing music he could write and what passion had clearly gone into it. After that show, I went up to him and asked him if they were planning on recording. When he told me they were just going to do something at home, or with a friend’s computer, I told him right then and there that no, they were going to go to Chris Pierce’s studio, and I would take care of it. I didn’t care if it was ever released, I just wanted those songs to be recorded exactly how they wanted them to sound with no limitations. I had thought about it for all of five seconds and I’ve never felt that way about any band before or since. That was the thing about Jamie and his music. It was truly moving and was everything that



KEVIN MORBY

KEVIN MORBY



6. Sometimes, ya GOTTA GET
RIPPED.(OFF)

7. MUST YEARN

8. DON'T MAKE A STINK.

9. SOMETIMEs You GOTTA MAKE
A STINK.

10. GOTTA GET A GRIP

11. ROLL WITH THE PUNCHES



MAGGIE SIMPSON

music has ever meant to me. I threw money that I couldn't afford to spend at him solely because I wanted to always be able to listen to those songs. I've never met a more genuine and talented person and I just hope that his music will stay available and accessible to those who seek it out. I will never forget Jamie's friendship and will always be honored to have been a part of his life.

—Lauren Measure

JAMIE HAD A THING FOR CELEBRITIES. And that "thing" could best be described as taking full advantage of any moment to ridicule them, in person, in the most ridiculous way possible. His tauntings of Macaulay Culkin ("You fucked Michael Jackson in the ass!" and "When's *Home Alone IV* coming out?") were legendary, but my favorite Jamie celebrity showdown happened one night at a stupid hipster bar on the Lower East Side. Some bands were playing downstairs, but upstairs, there was... Elijah Wood! Sitting coolly at the bar! We all knew what would transpire. However, on this occasion, there were props involved. I had just given Jamie a copy of my zine, and he walked up to Mr. Wood, with me a few feet away, and reached out his hand, "Hi. I'm Maddy. And I want you to have a copy of my zine." Elijah shook his hand, took the zine, but then paused and said,

"Maddy? As in Matty?" trying to understand the confusing gender implications of such a name. "No," Jamie replied. "Maddy as in Madeleine." The conversation thus ending on this odd note, Elijah went back to drinking at the bar while we headed downstairs to dance like maniacs. A few hours later, we went upstairs and noticed that Elijah Wood was leaving. Jamie, dispensing with his previous strained cordiality, opened the door of the bar and yelled across the street the kind of line that so artfully combines juvenile potty humor and complete absurdity: "Fuck me in the buttocks, Frodo Baggins!"

—Maddy Tight Pants

JAMIE EWING WAS MY BANDMATE, PARTNER IN CRIME, AND ONE OF THE BEST FRIENDS THAT I COULD HAVE EVER HOPED FOR. I met Jamie in Little Rock, Arkansas, a few years ago. We were both on tour and unfamiliar with each other's bands. We became quick friends over a jar of moonshine that my dad gave me that night. We kept in touch and when I moved to Boston a year later, our bands continued playing shows together. When Bent Outta Shape was planning their last show, he asked my band to play. It pained me to learn that one of my favorite bands was calling it quits, but, at the same time, I felt honored to be asked

to play their last show. Jamie and I enjoyed each other's company so much that, shortly after Bent Outta Shape broke up, we started a new band, the Young Men. For about a year, I would go to Brooklyn from Boston for half the week nearly every week to practice, record, and play shows with the Young Men, but it was mostly to spend time with Jamie. I felt very lucky to have the opportunity to know and make music with him.

I think it's safe to say that I speak for everyone when I say that Jamie touched many people with his music, jokes, generosity, and hundred-dollar smile that we will never forget. For those who never had the incredible pleasure of knowing Jamie the way that I knew him, I wonder what their life is like not having him there to make every day just a little better with one of his new songs, phone calls, or letters. And for those people, I hope that they have someone comparable in their life and that they recognize and appreciate what they have. There are no words that will ever be able to express how much I truly miss my friend. I am grateful for the times we spent together and the music that came out of it.

Jamie, wherever you are, I hope there's a guitar. I miss you, buddy.
—Barker Gee



The God Damn Doo Wop Band

SHIT BURNS YOU OUT AFTER A WHILE. It's a fact of life. You could watch the craziest, straight-up best band every night of your life, but you'd still grow tired of them after a while. That's why I like The God Damn Doo Wop Band. It's nice to have a change of pace once in a while, down a speed from the usual fast and/or angry punk rock or hardcore (even though some of the Doo Wop Band do that separately in other bands, anyway).

It's always great to see people on the "dude" level of things put their noses to the grindstone and come up with something new—in this case, some classic doo-wop (which, according to them, has been subject to debate) and soul, that is still genuine and non-derivative. But the kicker, as with any punks, there's an inherent craziness, leading to some wild shows—I've caught a few, and it's always great. After all, they gotta earn that "God Damn" somehow.

Interview by Joe Evans III
Photos by Kelly Lone, Amy K.,
and courtesy of the band
Layout by Albert Lam

Kat: Vocals | **Saumer:** Vocals
Annie: Vocals | **Dave:** Guitar
Dylan: Bass | **Erik:** Drums

Joe: Seriously, why did you decide to start a doo-wop band?

Saumer: Do we need to answer this seriously?

Joe: If you want, you can just have both a serious and a joke answer.

Kat: I'd written a couple of songs—"Don't Forget Me" and "One More Night"—before.

Annie: And didn't you write one of those for either the Strait A's or 24 Reasons Why?

Kat: Yeah. They did "Don't Forget Me." Carissa was supposed to be starting a doo-wop-ish type band. I had written those songs. We worked together at the coffee shop. My original idea was that I was just going to—and I'd talked to Annie about it before, too—write these songs and have people record them with me, and just do it like that and not have a band. But then somehow we started a band. Slowly the other bands went away [laughs]. So it was me, Carissa, and Ross. And Saumer was around a little bit then.

Saumer: Well, it was in my basement.

Kat: Yeah. And Dave lived there, too, in Saumer's basement where we were practicing. We didn't have a drummer then.

Dave: And my drum set was sitting right there. I'd listen to them, like, "This band needs a fuckin' drummer!"

Kat: So like everything else, it was just kind of half-assed. "Oh, this is what we're doing now? Okay. Sounds good." [laughs]

Joe: Do you feel like there's a strong bridge between doo-wop and pop punk?

Kat: Yeah, look at all that Queers shit, you know? You've got The Queers covering Skeeter Davis. It's not exactly doo-wop, but you get the idea. And the Teen Idols.

Annie: And the Ramones, let's not forget.

Kat: Like any "sha-la's" and stuff like that. All that stuff is pop punk. I think I'm going to dig myself into another hole. "They didn't fuckin' come up with that shit on their own!" [Laughing]

Joe: How do you respond to someone who accuses you of being a...

Kat: Girl-fronted pop group?

Joe: Instead of a doo-wop group.

Kat: Oh that's never happened! [Sarcastic]

Saumer: How do you respond to something like that?

Kat: I'd say "yeah." Okay, I mean, in theory, you should be able to take all of the music away and still be able to have a self-supporting song in order to have doo-wop. With a lot of our stuff you can do that, and we would rather have four vocal parts rather than three, but with how half-assed everything is already anyway, throwing one more person into the fire is ridiculous. And if they really want to get into the fact we're not a doo-wop band, fuck them!

Annie: Also, at its core, isn't doo-wop just pop music with more singers?

Saumer: Doo wop is basically about the sounds of the backup vocals, the nonsense words. That's what one definition of doo-wop is, with the actual back up vocals...

Annie: ...acting as instruments.

Saumer: Yeah, but with the nonsense words. I read it in a "book" [Also kind of sarcastic] or something. But who cares?

Kat: The reason we ended up being called The God Damn Doo Wop Band anyways was because we had written these songs. A bunch of people already knew I was working on doo-wop type stuff anyway, and, finally, we had our first show coming up and we didn't have a band name. And the only way anyone would know what the

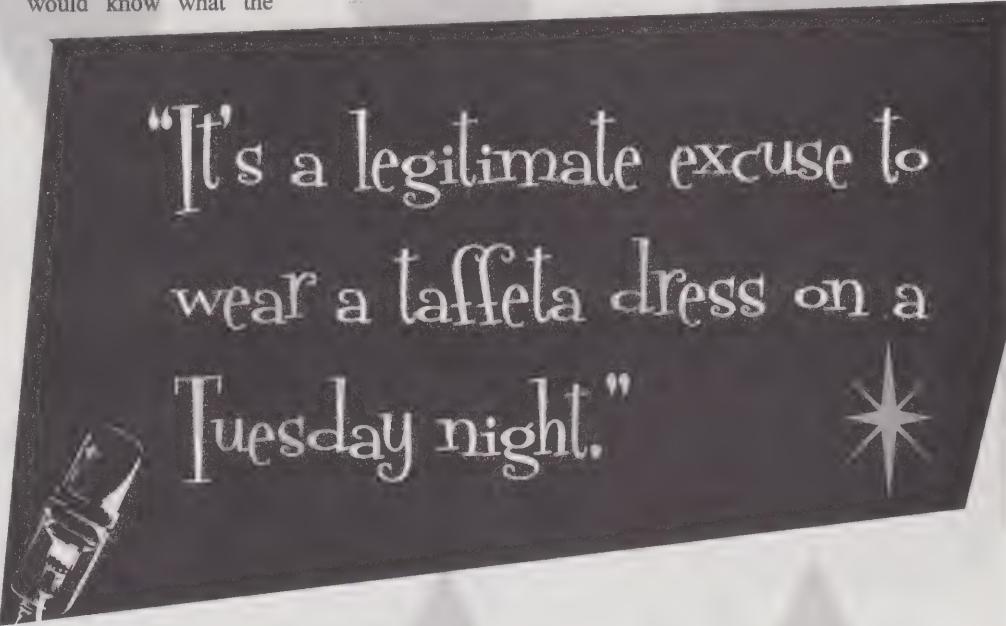
and they're like, "Okay, you can't say that or swear," and we're like, "Well, what are you going to do about our name then?" So we've been the Gosh Darn, the Golly Wolly...

Dylan: Plus MPR takes donations from people. It's not like a private radio station where they can do whatever they want. We were on another show on like Drive105 or something, where they could say "God Damn." It was more an issue with the public radio station.

Kat: Radio monitoring.

Saumer: People are real sticklers about the public radio monitoring, too. It's all people who just want to give their money and love god.

Dave: We also just like having a multi-faceted band name.



hell we were talking about—like if we came up with some random name—no one would have any idea what it was or who we were or what we were doing. So, seriously, when I was making up the flier I put it on there. People would ask, "What are you working on?" and I'd be like...

Kat and Saumer: "It's a god damn doo-wop band!"

Saumer: Personally, I'd be like, "Well, I have doo-wop band practice." We were writing the songs as doo-wop songs, but it wasn't real concerned about how the music came out. It didn't have to be so "traditionally" doo-wop. They were just playing music how they knew how to play, and we would just sing the way we knew how to sing—but with as much doo-wop influence that we knew how to do—and that's really it.

Kat: Fuck 'em.

Joe: Speaking of names, what's the difference between the God Damn Doo Wop Band and the Gosh Darn Doo Wop Band?

Kat: People's parents have problems with it, over this "blasphemy." My Dad's a minister, so this doesn't go over too well. Also, one you can say on the radio and the other you can't. We did something on Minnesota Public Radio

Kat: You can pretty much just remove the "God Damn" part and put anything else in there.

Annie: We can be the Spruce Street Doo Wop Band.

Dave: Or the Paulie Shore Doo Wop Band.

Saumer: Or the H+R Doo Wop Band.

Kat: And, most likely, everyone's still going to probably know who you're talking about.

Dylan: If anyone criticizes and calls us a female pop band, we'll just have to call it the Doo Wop Based Band.

Kat: Yeah, and I'm super worried that somebody's going to call us a female-fronted pop band. "That sucks! How dare they!" [Laughs]

Erik: The God Damn Girl Group?

Kat: I think it was your bandmate Bill who I was trying to explain the idea. He's like, "Oh, you're not a real doo-wop band." But in the '50s, to blatantly be named "God Damn," it wouldn't fucking happen, and we're not a stereotypical '50s group. We're fuckin' uppin' the punks.

Dave: We don't like labels even though we labeled ourselves.

Joe: I feel like that's part of what appeals to me in general. At first, someone would probably just assume that you're a jokey/



"We don't like labels even though we labeled ourselves."



novelty act, but, really, you're genuinely into what you're doing. In the past two days, we went to a house show one day and saw The Chiffons (classic '60s girl group) the next. Like, you're down.

Kat: That's kind of the thing, too. Whenever we would get asked to play a show, every once in a while we'll wear '50s dresses and stuff like that, but it's not the case all the time. If we feel like doing it, we're going to do it. If we don't, we show up in our regular clothes. We've pretty much just done our tours in regular clothes, because who wants to be wearing some itchy taffeta dress every night on tour?

Saumer: Or also wear the same dress, night after night?

Kat: I'll practically ruin them, per night, whenever we do, so that would just be really expensive.

Saumer: The dresses came into it not to have a kitsch factor, but because we really like to wear dresses [smiles]. It's fun!

Kat: It's a legitimate excuse to wear a taffeta dress on a Tuesday night.

Saumer: We're still going to wear them even though someone may find it cheesy.

Kat: I think getting compared to the Suicide Girls where it's like "Oh, they wear these fucking dresses and shit," that's the only time anyone has ever really considered us as a kitschy type thing, shtick, whatever. I mean, we do it because it's fun.

Joe: I was going to mention the dresses anyway, because I've seen you before, and a friend of mine complained that you weren't wearing the dresses.

Kat: And that's the freakin' thing. We get guff no matter what we do! I can't do anything right. We'll get asked to do shows with people expecting us to be wearing them, but that doesn't always happen. When we want to wear them, we wear them.

Joe: Is that why you got asked to play at a fashion show?

Kat: No, we actually didn't even get to wear our own shit at the fashion show. We were dressed up.

Joe: What was that for?

Dylan: It's basically a local thing that they do every year. It's a big fundraiser for Minnesota Springboard For The Arts, which is a cool thing.

Annie: It's a big huge fashion show and they ask bands every year to play, regardless of what they sound like.

Dylan: It's all these different styled bands.

Kat: There were rock bands from here, there were dance bands. They pretty much cover everything across the board. The fashion show is all local designers who design clothes for all the bands. They have designers doing runway shows while the bands are playing. All the proceeds from the CDs and the door goes to Springboard For The Arts. If bands or artists of any kind need loans to get something done, of it they need a lawyer, they can provide that. It's basically all kinds of assistance for artists.

Dylan: A big thing, too, is its artists' access to health care. We got to wear these cable guy T-shirts. It was pretty awesome.

Dave: I'm so glad I missed that.

Kat: Actually, for the fashion show, we got dressed up as zombies. That was pretty fun.

Saumer: It was zombie prom... It's funny, at that show there was the doo-wop band, and there was "The Dance Band." Or maybe it was just "Dance Band," which was kinda funny.

Kat: We're all now just claiming that we're in a band with a label of some sort, prior to it.

Saumer: "It's a Minneapolis thing."

Kat: The next one will be The Pop Punk Band.

Joe: Saumer, how would you describe your dancing ability?

[Everyone laughs]

Dave: Nice!

Kat: Who did you talk to?!

Saumer: [Pointing at Kat] That's not from you?

Dave: I was actually thinking that.

Kat: Maybe from conversation.

Saumer: [Giving Joe a dirty look] A work in progress [laughs]. It's taking a very, very long time. I really don't have much rhythm. That's it. I can't dance.

Kat: You should've asked her right now to clap and sing at the same fucking time.

Joe: Can you clap and sing at the same time?

Saumer: I'm getting *better*. I'm better at clapping and singing at the same time than I am at dancing. Dancing and singing... [shakes head]

Annie: Is that why you don't have "moves"?

Saumer: I can wiggle a little.

Dave: It's the "Saumer Saunter."

Joe: When did Dave move from drums to guitar?

Kat: We had a crew change.

Dave: It was a gradual change.

Kat: Yeah, we just switched and then we simplified a couple of things. When we played the John Waters show, it was the first time (Erik) Silj played with us, not knowing that he had talked to our old singer, Carissa, down in Gainesville at the Fest. He had said, "Hey, if you need a drummer for that John Waters show, you can have me do it!" which I found out about later. So he started playing drums with us then, after I figured he didn't want to play with us permanently. [laughs].

Saumer: It wasn't just a straight switch from drums to guitar. He came back, revised.

Kat: And actually he's more guitarist than drummer.

Dave: I'd say I'm more of a drummer.

Saumer: We barely know the guy.

Dylan: I'm more of a keytar player.

Dave: I'm really good at kazoo. But yeah, it just happened because the old guitar player was no longer in the band.

Joe: How did you end up opening up for John Waters?

Kat: I don't even know. [laughs].

Saumer: It was the public radio, right? For some reason they thought that we'd be a good match.

Dave: Probably because of *Crybaby*.

Saumer: Yeah, it's probably the '50s weirdo kind of thing.

Kat: It's funny, because about two days before I got the phone call asking us to play, I was having this awesome breakdown where I put out this Myspace bulletin.

Saumer: One of your many.

Kat: It said I need to get my shit together, and go to school or something, or some shit like that; otherwise I need to sell my songs to John Waters. And then two days later I'm at work and I get this call saying, "Hey, this is Leif Larson from Minnesota Public Radio. I was wondering if the God Damn Doo Wop Band is still a band?" And I'm like, "Yeah," and they're like, "Oh, well good. We were looking for a band to open for John Waters," and I'm just like, "Who the fuck is this?"

Saumer: You called me, freaking out. I got pretty excited too. Kinda dig the guy. He's pretty awesome. So, yeah, we got to meet John Waters. That was a highlight. That's when we peaked.

Dave: It was interesting, too, because it was me and Silj's first time playing our respective instruments in the band.

Kat: And we had maybe an hour and a half's worth of practice after not playing a show...

Saumer: For months and months and months and months and months.

Kat: Carissa was on vacation and flew back from Pittsburgh or something.

Annie: I was kind of hoping that she wouldn't. [laughter].

Kat: Yeah, she was like [high, extra Midwestern accented voice] "Hey, Kat, if ya need an extra singer for that show, or any show, let me know!"

Erik: So, lesson learned: If you want to get a cool band, book a cool show first and the rest will fall into place.

Saumer: Great idea!

Dave: "We'll figure it—okay, hold on—give me a week..."

Joe: How long has Annie been promising a new record?

[Everyone laughs]

Annie: I only did it once. And I lied...

Dave: It was a nice surprise.

Annie: I lied. I hoped and had some wishful thinking. Well, that's how The Soviettes did everything. We had a time limit because, for whatever reason, we thought we had to have a record out every year. And we would get it done. We would write songs in the studio, but we would get it fucking done. [Laughter. Shrugs.] I just figured we'd give ourselves a time limit.

Saumer: I'm glad you take that initiative. It's good to have around.

Kat: Plus we had a bunch of songs in our heads anyway. That at least pushes them out.

Joe: How did you end up playing the *Mallrats* mall?

Kat: My old roommate Kristen works for some organization, and so we got asked if we wanted to play a breast cancer fund raiser at that mall. In one of the stores that was shut down, they had a stage set up in there. We were also part of a package where we got sold with a bouncy castle and a bunch of hot dogs, for like a graduation party or whatever.

Dave: Which we still need to do...

Saumer: Does that make any sense to you?

Joe: Yeah.

Saumer: We play a lot of "organized events."

Dave: You should have asked us how we got to play for the Minnesota Twins.

Joe: How did you get asked to play for the Minnesota Twins?

Saumer: The same thing.

Dave: Because we got kicked out of *that* show!

Saumer: And they felt bad about it, so they figured—so the reason why we got kicked out is because the people who went there were older...

Annie: Wait, you played for the Minnesota Twins?

Kat: It was for the Diamond Awards.

Annie: What? Why can't we get shows like that now!

Saumer: Because they all ended up really badly!

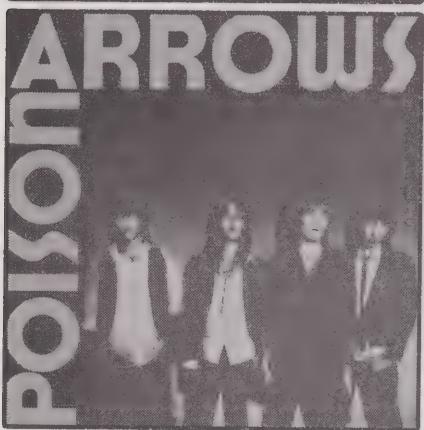
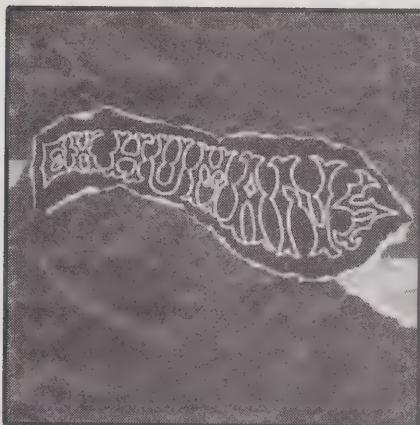
Kat: And we get kicked out of all of them!

Dave: It was at The Depot (an old Minneapolis train station, converted to an ice rink and hotel), and we were playing in the corner, really quietly, to ourselves, basically.

Saumer: Yeah, the reason we got kicked out is that the people who went to this benefit were older, wealthy people...

Kat: A lot of them liked us but...

Saumer: Who couldn't quite handle it so up close, and so loud, because the sound was in



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"We were part of a package where we got sold with a bouncy castle and a bunch of hot dogs."

an old department store, so it's just, [makes "loud" hand motions] weird.

Dave: The other act was just a guy with a piano.

Saumer: Yeah, doing keyboard. [Makes "quiet" keyboard motions].

Kat: Plus we didn't show up in time to get a sound check in, so it was just fucking blaringly loud, and getting asked to turn down and turn down. After we got there, the whole PA needed to be rewired. It was a mess. Our guitarist was the one who rewired and set up everything, and he was not in a good mood. He then got yelled at to turn it down a little bit, and then got screamed at. He just went off. And then all of us went off. And then I hit the free line bar. [Laughs]

Saumer: The boss of her old roommate felt bad. She got us to do the Twins thing.

Kat: I think a lot of people were like, "What the fuck happened?"

Saumer: We didn't have enough songs to fill the time, so we just repeated our set three times. [laughing]. And our friends decided to come by and stand outside, because it's all glass. It's an ice skating rink at times. It's all glass walls, and it's really cool. But all of our friends are outside, yelling and holding up signs. I don't remember what they said though.

Dave: I don't either, but it was really funny.

Kat: Apparently, some baseball dudes liked us though.

Joe: Were you ever noticed by *The Onion*?

Kat: Yes.

Joe: So did you get an award from *The Onion* A.V. Club?

Dylan: It was "Best Terrible Band Name."

Saumer: No, no. It was talking about something bad, and it referenced us, but it wasn't part of it... Joe, do you know the answer to this?

Joe: I vaguely know.

Saumer: What do you know?

Joe: Something about an Onion A.V. Club "Best Of", or year end list.

Kat: Yeah, they have a bunch of different categories and there's best of, worst of, and I think we were under the funniest.

Dave: I think it was "Best worst."

Dylan: We just love it when the name is printed.

Joe: It was for the "Best Worst Band Names of '06", under "Simply Funny."

Kat: We'll take it!



Cigarettes and Coffee

One Punk's Guide to...

OTIS Redding

By Todd Taylor | Illustrations by Danny Martin

The Slightest Suggestion in a River of Diversions

In what follows, I'm not saying in any way, shape, or form that Otis Redding was a punk. He wasn't a punk archetype for Bad Brains, a missing link, anything of the sort, but he's a wellspring of fantastic music. I think he's a great musician; one that—in the very system of major labels now—can't and won't be replicated. He was as much a man as a time (the late '50s to late '60s) and a place (the South, pre Martin Luther King Jr. assassination).

Inauspiciously enough, the first time that the music I was hearing was attached to the name Otis Redding, I was sitting on the linoleum floor of a Pic'n'Save. I remember playing with some multi-colored army men that had previously been pulled out of their wrappers. I was nine. I remembered the seagull sounds at the beginning of a song while really wanting a gun that sparked at the barrel when I repeatedly pulled the trigger. A couple years later, I remembered the same song playing on

TV. It had been retooled as a jingle for a root beer: "Sippin' My Hires All Day."

Otis and I briefly crossed paths again in 1986, when I felt a more than passing affinity for Jon Cryer's character, Duckie, in *Pretty in Pink*. In one scene, Duckie busted into the record store that Andie, played by Molly Ringwald, was working in and put his whole body into lip-synching along to "Try a Little Tenderness." Although the red-haired girl was unimpressed by Duckie's performance, I was intrigued. But, instead of looking further into Otis, I bought the soundtrack to the movie. The title song by the Psychedelic Furs had grabbed my attention more.

I'm sure that I heard more Otis songs over the years, but never meaningfully, never in context. It wasn't until 1997 that my obsession began in earnest. It was piqued by one song: "Doublewhiskeycokenoise." Dillinger Four, I'll fully admit, are responsible for a big batch of my life decisions, especially concerning music. (If you think this is an overstatement, I consider D4 as a cornerstone band to *Razorcake*. If they didn't exist, we wouldn't exist

in our current form.) When Erik's higher-pitched voice proclaimed, "God save Otis Redding because I know he's never gone," I got down to tracking down some Otis records. Years later, I put together that the sound bite to the beginning of the song—the "Hi, this is the Big O. I was just standing here thinking about you, thought I'd write a song about you, and dedicate it to you. Take a listen"—was taken from an Otis Redding song called "Stay in School."

Musical obsessions can start with the smallest germ, the slightest suggestion in a river of diversions. In the intervening years, I've learned to dance marginally better to Otis Redding by paying attention to the drum beat and moving my butt to it instead of following the guitar or the voice. It was also such a treat to be in my friend Greg Pettix's (formerly of The Weird Lovemakers and currently in The Cuntifiers) house, saying, "Man, I've really been getting into Otis Redding," and seeing Greg pull out an obscure compilation and reply, "Ever hear of the Pinetoppers? No? Then listen to this!" and then everyone in the room did little spontaneous dances to "Shout Bamalama," a song that seemed just-recorded and fire-crackering from the stereo; not some forty-year-old relic that had to be considered soberly and handled delicately. And I'd be remiss not to mention that my first dance as a married dude with my lovely wife, Mary-Clare, was to Otis singing, "That's How Strong My Love Is."

So, in the spirit of Otis Redding providing me with hundreds of hours of improved living standards by listening to his music, I present the following: "One Punk's Guide to Otis Redding," a short biography of the man, his life, and his legacy.

"Otis Redding always believed in Otis Redding. He'd tell me, 'Don't worry, I'm gonna make you happy one day,' and I was like, 'We could starve to death!' That's just how positive he was."

Zelma Redding

Is It Blasphemous to Believe in One's Own Talent as a Form of Faith?

Otis Redding, Jr. was born on September 9, 1941 to Otis Redding, Sr. and Fannie Roseman Redding, into a family of six in the small town of Dawson, Georgia. Dawson is situated in Terrell County, a sleepy little farming community, twenty miles south of Plains, the hometown of Jimmy Carter. The entire local economy revolved around peanuts and cotton. At the age of three, Otis's family moved 120 miles to Macon, Georgia in a neighborhood called Bellevue into the Tindall Heights Housing Project. It was crowded. More than four hundred apartments were assembled in dense clusters of barracks-style town homes and flats. During this time, Otis received no formal music education. He learned music by singing with the choir of the Vineville Baptist Church. He later participated in the band at Ballard-Hudson, the "Senior High School for Negro Boys and Girls" in Macon. It was then that it became obvious to Otis Jr. that he wanted to be a singer in a band.

Otis's dad was a Baptist minister who preached on the weekends. During the week, he worked as a maintenance worker at nearby Robins Air Force Base. He didn't like that his son wanted to become a singer and was blunt in his disapproval. "I'm going to tell you something, Otis. You won't ever amount to anything with this singing, this hanging out at nightclubs, not a thing." To drive the point home, he ended the discussion with, "And I'm going to tell you something else. Whether you make it or not, I'm never going to see you in one of those places. Nightclubs are outside the limit of God's realm."

Otis responded to his father in a way most kids do when presented with a challenge in the form of a threat: he mostly ignored his father's warnings. Otis Jr. knew some things his father probably didn't put weight in. Although Macon, Georgia was a

town with a population of a little more than 160,000 in 1950, there was a much larger chance for an aspiring musician than meets the eye. It was a place with a deep musical well, where many before him had drunk deep of its waters. Music seemed to bubble up from the ground. In the 1840s, a man by the name of Alabama Vest invented the kazoo there.

During tenth grade, Otis, Jr., spurred on by a mixture of his own ambition, his love of music, and the driving obligation to financially secure his family's future after his father had contracted tuberculosis and lost his job at the air force base, dropped out of school. Otis Sr. still wasn't impressed. He believed that Otis Jr. had foolhardy, unrealistic dreams and was risking the family's well-being. "Otis's the worst child I have," Otis Sr. lamented. "He worries me to death because he ain't never going to amount to nothing."

Otis Jr., although religious and respectful of his father, was pragmatic in realizing his dreams of becoming a singer. He'd seen the blossoms of colossal talent, nurtured with hard labor, bear fruit right in front of him. Macon was home to James Brown and Little Richard. Little Richard was experiencing regional success with his band, The Upsetters. He had even grown up in a neighborhood close to Otis. They both had attended the same high school. If Little Richard, the son of a Macon bootlegger, could make it out of Pleasant Hill and have his song "Long Tall Sally" hit #1 on the R&B national charts in March of 1956, why couldn't Otis Redding Jr. make it out of Bellevue?

In the segregated South, Otis could only find predictably mundane, hard labor jobs to support his musical habit. At fifteen years old, his fate was poised to become that of just another black kid from the projects: uneducated, poor, and working manual labor for the rest of his life. He began a pattern of bouncing from job to job. He roofed houses, cleaned yards, dug wells, delivered groceries, and painted fences. One time, he found a job on a construction crew and was put to work operating an air hammer, breaking concrete. Around lunchtime, Otis quit. He later found work in a junkyard. In between these times, Otis Jr. continued pursuing his singing at nearby white colleges and high schools and disabled veterans' clubs.

In 1957, when they were both sixteen, Otis Redding met Zelma Atwood. That year, he asked her to marry him. She agreed. In 1958, Otis and Zelma married. They would go on to have three children together: Dexter, Karla, and Otis III. Zelma was a believer in her husband's talents: "Otis Redding always believed in Otis Redding. He'd tell me, 'Don't worry, I'm gonna make you happy one day,' and I was like, 'Lord have mercy, we could starve to death! That's just how positive he was.'

When DJs Could Play Songs They Liked

In between odd jobs, Otis Redding Jr. did all he could to keep his name, face, and voice in front of people instead of behind a gas pump or in a yard raking leaves. In addition to performing at high school and college frat parties, Otis got a boost from Hamp Swain, "The King Bee," a DJ of a black-format radio station, WIBB. In those days, it was still possible for DJs to choose their own music and Hamp tirelessly promoted local and state talent. Hamp was not only the first DJ to ever play James Brown on the air; Little Richard had gotten his start as a vocalist in Hamp's band, The Hamptones. Hamp also hosted Hamp Swain's Teenage Party, a live music

competition every Saturday morning at the Douglass Theatre. Otis Jr. took on all comers.

Somewhat predictably, early remembrances of Otis's singing, before he had developed his own style, were that he sounded like a mix between Little Richard and a heritage of gospel music. But that didn't detract from Otis's charm, talent, and ability to perform, as evidenced by taking home the five dollar prize fifteen times in a row. He was then asked to refrain from further competition to give someone else a chance to win. As Otis Jr.'s local star was starting to rise, he dropped the "Jr." from his performing name.

From his exposure at Hamp Swain's Teenage Party, Otis met two people who would change his life: local guitar hero Johnny Jenkins and promoter Phil Walden. Phil was already Johnny's manager and wanted to be Otis's. All three would become lifelong friends. It's believed that Otis had crossed paths when Phil Walden was president of his high school fraternity. By the age of eighteen, Phil was managing several R&B groups, many of whom were black, and arranged bookings at white colleges and clubs, so the bands could make more money. To make ends meet, Phil also worked as a part-time clerk in a men's clothing store while he attended Mercer University.

Phil's standards were high because he knew what great music looked and sounded like. Otis's powerful voice was reminiscent of Little Richard, who Walden had seen surreptitiously when he was in the ninth grade. Phil had been on the way to watch a swim meet at the YMCA when he noticed a crowd gathering across the street for an Amos Milburn concert at the city auditorium. He bought a ticket and made his way to the upper balcony where whites were allowed to sit. He was swept away by the opening act, Little Richard. "He just destroyed me.... He had this microphone between his legs and he would pound the piano. He would wave to all the gay guys, all his 'sisters' in the audience... I had never been exposed to something that raw in my life."

Phil Walden was hearing something new emerge from Otis—something that was beyond a mere mimicking of previous singers. Through his connections, he was instrumental in Otis joining The Upsetters, Little Richard's road band. In July, 1960 Otis's voice was first recorded to vinyl, albeit in a supporting vocalist role. Between quick regional tours, Otis still had bills to pay. He never forgot, abandoned, or took Zelma for granted. To pull his own financial weight, he periodically had to swallow his pride, reign in his ambition, and took manual labor jobs to help support his family with money he couldn't make strictly as an entertainer. Zelma worked as a waitress in a barbecue restaurant, earning thirty-five dollars a week.

"Nothing Beats Failure but a Try" —Johnny Jenkins

Within months of joining the Upsetters, eighteen-year-old Otis quit and joined another Macon-based band. He became the lead singer of confusingly named Pat Tea Cake And The Mighty Panthers with guitarist Johnny Jenkins. Johnny was the second instrumental person whom he'd met at Hamp Swain's Teenage Party. After a short time, the band's name changed to Johnny Jenkins And The Pinetoppers Featuring Otis Redding And The Shooters.

Johnny Jenkins—known locally as "Guitar"—was a force in and of himself. Whenever they played frat houses, he whipped white kids into frenzies; gyrating and bending notes. His performance was so far removed from Pat Boone, Paul Anka, or even Elvis Presley, that it must have seemed like a sexed-up alien had dropped down from another planet and was guitar-blasting their bodies with six string assaults of unholy rock'n'roll.

Unsuspecting white kids weren't the only ones floored by Johnny. On a visit to his aunt in Macon, a young Jimi Hendrix soaked in the flamboyance of Jenkins's left-handed, upside-down guitar playing and acrobatic showmanship—like when Johnny played the guitar behind his head. It made a deep, lifelong impression on Jimi, who one of the Pinetoppers remembered as the "little guy who would follow us around a lot."

In July, 1960, Otis moved out to Los Angeles in an attempt to further his career. That year, he recorded "She's All Right" and "Tuff Enuff," under the name Otis And The Shooters, for Trans World Records. The response was, at best, mild. Undaunted, Otis returned back to Macon, and the same year, cut another 45, this time with Johnny Jenkins And The Pinetoppers—"Shout Bamalama" and "Fat Gal"—for the Confederate label (curiously, with a Rebel flag as its logo in the middle of the record's label). The response, again, was mild. People seemed to like Otis's voice, but he was still largely dismissed as a vocalist who loved Little Richard a wee bit too much to be taken seriously as little more than an impersonator.

Johnny Jenkins went to Memphis in October 1962 to record at the then newly established Stax studios. Stax had been started by a brother and sister. Twenty-five year old Jim Stewart worked at First Tennessee Bank and played fiddle in a country band. He had leased out a recording studio in an old movie theater and had initially planned on recording country and western music. Estelle Axton, Jim's sister and co-owner, was instrumental in its day-to-day operations and ran the attached record store. (The name, "Stax," came about when the first parts of the two owners' last names were smooshed together.)

The Beauty of Simplicity

Otis was both the lead singer and the driver of the group's rented station wagon. Johnny Jenkins didn't have a driver's license, didn't like to drive, and refused to fly. Johnny never left the Southeast during his entire lifetime. The recording session was supposed to showcase Johnny's original guitar-heavy compositions, but they weren't going well. According to Johnny, it was a disaster. With some time left at the end of the pre-paid three-hour session, Otis was given the opportunity to cut two of his own songs: "These Arms of Mine"—what could be called a country soul ballad with its determined pleading and earthy tone—and "Hey Hey Baby," which sounded like a new Little Richard tune and was chosen to be the side to promote to local radio. Stax's thinking was that since, in 1962, Little Richard had renounced recording and performing secular music, had become a born-again Christian, and was attending bible college, his throne was vacant.

Otis's two cuts would eventually be released on Volt Records, a subsidiary of Stax. (Stewart was still thinking that Stax's main focus as a label would be country and western music.) "These Arms of Mine" was liberating for Otis. It enabled him to finally seek out his own personal vision as a singer and made him realize that real success wasn't going to come his way imitating someone else, but doing and developing his own thing.

Everyone close to Otis seemed to notice the change. "The thing that brought out a different style in him was when he came up with that song," said Johnny Jenkins. "That took him away from Little Richard. He had that Georgia gospel sound. He didn't just say, 'I love ya; I care about you,' like the average person would say and then be through with it. He'd keep repeating the same thing over and over and over until it got you." Zelma recognized the change, too. "Otis Redding couldn't be anything but Otis Redding.... His idol was Little Richard, but after he got in with Stax, Otis said, 'I can be me now.'"

From that day on, Otis worked his hardest at not having another job besides being Otis Redding.

"These Arms of Mine" became Otis's first nationally charted single and it forecasted the style of much of the music that Otis would continue to make. "Basically," Otis said, "I like any music that remains simple and I feel this is the formula that has made soul music successful. When any music form becomes cluttered or complicated, you lose the average listener's ear. There's nothing more beautiful than a simple blues tune. There's beauty in simplicity, whether you're talking about architecture, art, or music."

On the strength of "These Arms of Mine," Otis went back into the studio for Volt a second time and recorded his worst-selling single: "That's What My Heart Needs" backed with "Mary Had a Little Lamb." Instead of immediately letting Otis go for a poor-selling single, Stax owner Jim Stewart recognized Otis's "verve, vitality, and excitement" and agreed to cut four more singles in rapid



**"There's nothing more beautiful than a simple blues tune.
There's beauty in simplicity, whether you're talking about
architecture, art, or music."**

Otis Redding



succession. All of these singles were quickly collected and released as the twelve-song LP *Pain in My Heart*.

What a group of songs. What a debut record. It showcased Otis's distinctive new style. While still retaining Little Richard's band's up-tempo attack and tone, he coupled that runaway freight train to soul singer Sam Cooke's cool, smooth, confident phrasing. Sam Cooke's musical legacy was another recently developed void Otis wanted to fill. Late in 1964, Sam Cooke had been killed, wearing nothing but a shoe and a sports coat, in a suspicious shooting involving the manager of a seedy motel in Los Angeles.

Otis was able to take the best qualities of both of his heroes. His voice was, at times, a plaintive, honeyed gospel tenor. At other times, it was the rawness of man about to tear out from the grooves of the record and shake the listener directly. The glue that held it all together was Otis's *want*. When Otis sang about wanting something (anything, really, from love to some horns "right now!"), he got that idea and feeling across. The magic was that anyone listening to the song would feel it and would *want* it, too.

"When he'd get to singing," Johnny Jenkins recollects, "he'd just put his whole heart into it; he didn't just sing to be singing a song. That's the reason he couldn't lip-sync to his songs later on when he was on television. You can rehearse a song over and over until you can stand up there and sing it in your sleep. But when you sing it from the heart, it's always going to be different each time you sing it."

hatred. While Otis Redding didn't openly speak about racism very often, his guiding philosophy was as simple and direct as his music. "My pride comes from my soul, what I am and what I do, not from what some ignorant drunk does or doesn't think about me."

"Flash Don't Make Cash"

-Steve Cropper

Another unique aspect of the early recordings at Stax was that it had the capability to record only one track at a time. Everything was recorded simultaneously and there was no possibility of mixing in a tape of another performance with live studio sessions or dubbing in some effects. "If somebody screwed up," drummer Al Jackson remembered, "everybody had to start all over again. We cut songs in total." On the converse, "When the good stuff was done, it was done quick."

The cost of the magnetic tape that the songs were recorded on was a consideration. Out of necessity, the bathrooms were often used as the echo chambers. For musicians keen on keeping food in their stomachs, the result of these factors was to favor well-rehearsed, shorter songs. ("A Change Is Gonna Come," the longest song that Otis ever made clocked in at just over four minutes.) Steve Cropper assured that the musical considerations concerning brevity weren't purely financial, though; it was also aesthetic. "Flash don't make

"At Stax the rule is: whatever you feel, play it." Otis Redding

Even If You Were Green or Purple

Stax was an oasis; a melting pot in the heart of the South at the height of segregation and deep racial tension. It was said that as soon as anyone walked through the doors—even if you were green or purple—all that mattered was how well you played. The core studio musicians—often called the Stax house band—comprised organist/pianist Booker T. Jones, guitarist Steve Cropper, bassist Donald "Duck" Dunn, and drummer Al Jackson Jr. They were responsible for writing and playing over seventy percent of all Stax records. This half-black, half-white group—one of the first racially integrated bands in American popular music history—when they recorded by themselves, were known as Booker T. And The MG's (standing for Memphis Group). Stax studios also employed a sextet of men collectively called The Memphis Horns who filled out the distinctive sound. Each man of this extensive group would later be known as a quintessential musician on his respective instrument.

Let's take a moment to put this into context. Rock'n'roll—to the established order—when it was first ushered in by the likes of Little Richard in the 1950s, was the musical equivalent of a slave revolt. Blacks weren't supposed to be heard or seen. But to proclaim not only one's refusal to be quiet, but to "shake it! shake it! shake it!" could get a musician seriously hurt physically, mentally, and financially. And although Little Richard was convinced to change the initial lyrics of "tutti-frutti, loose booty" to "tutti frutti, aw rooty," his flamboyance and verve had provided one of the initial rips, ushering in an undeniable, fundamental change in American culture. Rock'n'roll and soul music became the not-so-coded messages for a generation of kids rebelling against what the conservative, Eisenhower-era mainstream was offering them. In a country actively practicing segregation and limiting nonwhite people's access to basic services, these types of music became the tangible bridge between new generations of black and white kids. Plus, it was just fun as hell. There was energy and excitement. It was juicy, sexy stuff. This wasn't holding hands in grade school. It was the back seat of a car on a high school Friday night without parental supervision.

During the preceding decades, athletes such as Jackie Robinson and jazz musicians such as Louis Armstrong had all accomplished the then unthinkable. They had inspired white people to finally appreciate black culture and put aside some of their racism and

cash... I find a hole and leave a hole or two in the process."

In 1965, Otis cut material for two full-length records: *The Great Otis Redding Sings Soul Ballads* and *Otis Blue*. Otis's signature was becoming a raw, rougher spontaneous style that bore a stark contrast to the smooth, sophisticated music of Motown. Otis was well aware of the difference—both stylistically and financially. "Motown has a lot of overdubbing," Otis said. "It's mechanically done. At Stax the rule is: whatever you feel, play it." Otis sung with an aching vulnerability that would later become realized as his trademark. (Although Otis would record a duet album with Carla Thomas, only two of his recordings ever featured a backup singer providing harmony.) With these two records, Redding's Southern, Georgian country sensibilities and powerful, husky tenor earned him recognition as one of the most authentic, soulful singers in a market dominated by polished Motown vocalists. Being so, Otis couldn't begin to compete commercially with the Motown artists who were regularly crossing over into the lucrative white market with #1 pop hits. In 1965, a single hit by a Motown group could sell a million copies. All of Otis's singles released from the beginning of his career through 1965, combined, sold 800,000 copies. Otis's total album sales had yet to hit the 100,000 mark.

Otis could have adapted his singing to a less rugged, more refined style to try to reach the wider white audience that—in 1965, anyway—was not widely aware of or receptive to the raw simplicity of rhythm and blues. Otis wanted to reach that audience but he didn't want to change his style. To Stax's credit, they let Otis be the best Otis he could be. Jim Stewart continuously encouraged Otis's originality. "His music was so raw and so earthy; without being trite, it was right from the soul. I'd never really worked with a singer who could reach down so deep and bring out that warmth and feeling."

Very few, if any, aspects of the band, music, or record art were sweetened up to appeal directly to white audiences. In addition to Otis's raw voice, Al Jackson hard-socked his snare drum and wasn't relegated to the back of the mix as distant papping. In the early '60s, soul albums shied away from featuring a photograph of the singer on either the front or back sleeve. The prevailing wisdom was that the portrait of a black man might deter potential white American buyers from purchasing the record. *The Great Otis Redding Sings Soul Ballads* features twenty-four identical pictures of a dapper, smiling Otis on the cover. By following his own path and respecting

the musicians around him, Redding's simple, earnest ballads and sparse, horn-punctuated tracks came to be considered prototypes of the Memphis sound. It was music that was funky and soulful and sweaty and unmistakably Southern, and Otis was widely becoming known as its undisputed king.

The recording of *Otis Blue* was a remarkable achievement. All but one of the tracks was recorded within twenty-four hours, in two lightning sessions on July 9, 1965 and in the early morning of the tenth. Yet there is no haste, no slop, nor looseness to the songs. They are tight, true, expert, and alive; songs that were the result of tireless touring and whip-smart musicianship converging in a controlled storm.

Otis Blue featured Otis's original song "I've Been Loving You Too Long," which was his biggest hit while he was alive. It reached #2 on the R&B (black) charts and #21 on the U.S. pop (white) charts. (In 1963, due to the crossover success of many black artists, *Billboard* suspended the R&B charts (previously delineated until 1949 as the Best Selling Retail Race Records) integrating them into the pop charts. It only lasted fourteen months until they were reintroduced, but it also explains why many of Otis's early songs didn't chart as R&B singles.)

Otis Blue included several minor hits as well: a version of Sam Cooke's "Shake" and an original, "Respect," which was later covered

how to move in those days. He was inept on stage. Yet in spite of his inertia, the women at the Apollo loved him, not only for his looks—he was tall, strapping, and handsome—but for his voice and vulnerability as well. Otis had chops like a wolf; his voice was big and gorgous and filled with feeling."

"Man, you better believe he was physical," said Wayne Jackson, the Stax trumpet player. "Otis had to have two cans of Right Guard to keep him down. The man was physical. Emotional and physical. He loved the horns. He would run from his vocal mic down to where the horns were and he'd shake his fist at you and be singing those parts. It was just electrifying. He'd get right in front of you until you were just foaming at the mouth. He'd just have you so excited." Don't think for a second that Otis was a pushover or didn't apply himself wholly to the tasks at hand. He was a man who knew his limitations and strengths. He took his performances very seriously. He only missed one show during his entire career and he never stopped a song, no matter the technical difficulty.

At a show in North Carolina, a man out in the crowd became jealous of the effect Otis was having on his wife. The jealous man decided he couldn't take it anymore and stormed up to the stage. Otis was defenseless, down on his knees, eyes closed, singing "These Arms of Mine." The man rushed on stage and sucker punched Otis in the face. Although it was a hard shot, Otis didn't fall. He continued

"Otis had to have two cans of Right Guard to keep him down. The man was physical. It was just electrifying. He'd get right in front of you until you were just foaming at the mouth."

Wayne Jackson

and given a wider audience by Aretha Franklin. Despite his strong following with soul listeners, however, Otis remained a largely marginal figure in the pop mainstream and America's consciousness. He wanted that to change.

The success of *Otis Blue* also propelled Stax Records as a new force in R&B music. Up until the spring of 1965, the label had remained a relatively minor, regional player in the music business. Of the hundred-odd singles released by Stax/Volt—Otis recorded for Volt Records for his entire career and cut eighteen singles with them—only eight had entered the R&B Top Ten. The instrumental "Green Onions" by Booker T. & The MG's was their only song that had topped the charts at #1. Jim Stewart hadn't had enough confidence in Stax's shaky existence to quit his day job at the bank until Otis's "Mr. Pitiful" hit #10 on the R&B charts.

Otis Used to Wear a Very Powerful Deodorant

To support his records, Otis toured relentlessly. What may surprise many is that he didn't move around the stage all that much. The pressure was all inside, being released breath by breath. Otis used his entire body to sing a song. Magma as opposed to lava. Otis, as Isaac Hayes noted, was "a statue of a man," over six feet tall, thickly built. He was a big guy, "The Big O"; intense in his delivery, putting all of the attention in his voice. Johnny Jenkins noted that Otis couldn't dance to save his life. "When he could do the steps, he couldn't sing. And when he sang, he couldn't do the steps. That's why, if you see him on film, you'll see him standing right in one spot. Sweating. Moving the trunk of his body. That foot standing still."

Otis had no real stage act, no gimmicks, no props, and no histrionics. He didn't swivel his hips or stagger to the floor and moan like James Brown. He couldn't throw himself around the stage like his contemporaries Sam and Dave. He simply stood at the microphone and sang, arms outstretched or emphasizing lyrics by bending at the waist, swaying his hips. "You could feel this plea coming from him," Atlantic's Jerry Wexler said. "He didn't know

singing until the natural closure of the song. When he finished, Otis stood up off his knees and calmly placed his microphone down. He then coolly sauntered offstage. As soon as he was out of the glare of the lights, he rushed after the man, quickly catching up to him. A cop working security at the show cordoned off other people from getting involved, yelling, "Hit him, Otis! Hit him! I don't see a thing! Hit him, Otis!" After the man's karmic debt was repaid for misinterpreting Otis's intentions, Otis got back up on stage and launched into his next song.

Tending His Own Garden

Le'ts take another step back. In the '50s and '60s, a vast majority of record industry—managers, record company bosses, and publishing houses—would rip off anyone of race, creed, color, or either gender if they could. (Keep in mind that very little has changed since then.) Ninety-nine percent of recording artists don't have the wherewithal to be musicians and be business-savvy enough to protect themselves at the same time. African Americans had the extra indignity of seeing their work watered down in white conversions and sold in great quantities to the mass white audience, enriching many people except the originators. It is only in very rare instances that black artists were treated fairly by their labels.

Because Otis didn't want to lose financial control of what he created and to avoid as many of these music industry traps as possible, he did five things, almost from the very beginning.

First, Otis hired a manager whom he trusted, Phil Walden (and Alan Walden, when Phil was drafted to serve in the Vietnam War). Phil and Otis stayed together throughout Otis's career.

Second, not only did Otis establish control of his own publishing, he actively kept and protected it. In a joint effort with the Walden brothers, they formed two music publishing companies: RedWal and Walco. Otis was the president of RedWal a music publishing house, which, by 1965, became the largest local music publisher in the South. He was very active in the company's operation and

directly responsible for the company's leadership in the music publishing field.

Blah, blah, blah. Business. But since Otis wrote many of his own songs—which was unusual for a singer at the time—he made sure he kept financial control of the songs he wrote. What that means is that he was set up to receive royalty payments for his own songs, not only when he performed and recorded them, but when someone else did. When Aretha Franklin went on to cover "Respect," Otis, through Walco—not some middleman who had wiggled into the picture with a small advance or an abusive contract—got paid.

Third, Otis kept as much of the making of his music as close as he could, under his own terms and timetables. He formed a production company, Jotis Records (along with Joe Galkin, the man who had initially paid for Johnny Jenkins' failed session at Stax), that released other artists that Otis considered promising. Jotis Record's second release was Arthur Conley's single "Sweet Soul Music." It was the most popular song Otis was involved with during his lifetime, selling over one million copies. Arthur thanked his mentor directly in the middle of his hit song, too: "Spotlight on Otis Redding now/ Singing fa fa fa..."

Otis knew that soul music took root in a live setting. To assure the quality of his live shows, if Otis performed locally, he would always use the same stable of musicians. He wouldn't use pick-ups local to that area. During the entire length of his career, if Otis played within driving distance of Macon, Johnny Jenkins would play guitar. Johnny didn't like to fly. If Otis played further away, he took the Bar-Kays, a revolving band of rigorously considered Macon musicians.

Fourth, Otis began nurturing other new, promising, and emerging artists beyond the release of their records. Otis Redding Enterprises did nothing but manage and promote the promising new artists they discovered and served as a center for the discovery, mentoring, and development of local Macon talent.

Fifth, today, we'd call it market research and focus groups. To Otis, it was a simple equation. He knew very well how to sell a piece of vinyl: "Get the women turned on to a song and they'll send the men out to buy the record."

Too Many Fuckin' Words

1966, following the pace of 1965, saw the release of two more complete, stellar Otis albums: *The Soul Album* and *Complete & Unbelievable: The Otis Redding Dictionary of Soul*. What's more remarkable than, "Whoa, that dude wrote a lot of shit in a short time," is that how great almost all of it is. Keep in mind that Otis had no formal musical training. He was instinctive. "Otis didn't know any music outside of what he could hum you," Wayne Jackson, the Stax trumpet player remembered. "He would really just thump the guitar and sing his words and hum the horn lines and pat out the drum thing."

What's compelling throughout Otis's entire catalog is how instinctual, fluid, and heart-correct all of the songs sound. As a listener, you can hear a heart beat, a man feel, and blood pulse inside of a song all at the same time. And it wasn't just Otis operating all by himself in a void. It was who he surrounded himself with. Many of his songs were co-written right in the studio. "It would start

with bones that somebody brought," Jackson remembered, "and the muscle and sinew and flesh and skin would be put on it while we were standing there and the monster would rise and live! Somehow." Critics were astounded that this musically untrained backwoods kids from Macon could come up with songs that were strikingly original—from the sophisticated use of horns to the subtle tempo changes. Yet the formula was—and is—really simple: Otis playing a guitar line, humming a melody, beating out the rhythm with his feet. It's how some of the best, gutsy, honest, strongest music ever recorded has been made.

Otis's songs were beautiful in their simplicity. Never mistake simplicity for stupidity or ignorance. Bob Dylan showed up the opening evening of Otis's stint at the Whiskey in Los Angeles. He made his way backstage with an acetate of a new song called "Just Like a Woman" and gave it to Otis. He asked Otis if he'd be interested in recording it. When Otis listened to it, his response was, "I like it but it's got too many fuckin' words. All these pigtails and bobbytails and all that stuff."



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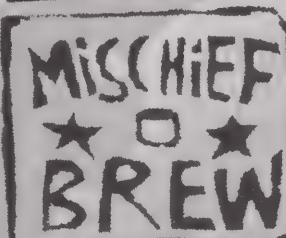


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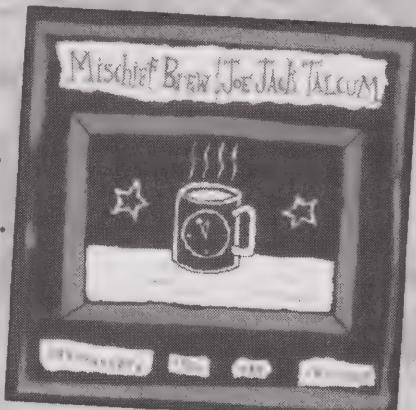
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No Sex, No Drugs, Just "I've Got Dreams to Remember"

Although still largely unknown outside of the American South, almost as soon as his initial recordings for Stax Records became available to avid R&B fans in Europe, Otis Redding became a prime influence for groups like Britain's Rolling Stones. Steeled by London's *Melody Maker* Magazine awarding Otis the title of "International Male Vocalist of the Year" in 1966—an award previously awarded to Elvis Presley for ten consecutive years and being the only black singer on the poll—Stax Records took an ambitious leap of faith in 1967 and launched the Stax/Volt Revue of Europe. The tour included Booker T. And The MG's, Carla Thomas, Eddie Floyd, Sam and Dave, The Mar-Keys, and Arthur Conley. The Beatles sent a limo to pick Otis Redding up. The tour was very successful in every way possible, both for Stax and for Otis Redding. It was gangbusters.

It's typical that at this part of the story of a musician's ascendancy that their vices and shortcomings start exacting their tolls. VH-1's

and construction was scheduled for an airstrip so he could land his twin-engine Beechcraft at the ranch.

In 1967, Otis got an invitation to play the Monterey International Pop Festival in Northern California. It was a three-day affair, featuring some of the biggest acts of the time: Simon & Garfunkel, The Byrds, The Who, The Animals, Jefferson Airplane, Big Brother And The Holding Company with Janis Joplin, and Jimi Hendrix. The festival didn't pay, but it was the offer that Otis had been waiting for. It was the chance to break into a bigger audience. If it had to be to the hippies, so be it. At least they were there for love and there were 30,000 of them in attendance. Introduced by Tommy Smothers, Otis and Booker T. and the MG's took the stage. They were probably the only people at the festival wearing suits. Otis became the unexpected star of the show, starting late and in the fog. Being virtually unknown on the West Coast at the beginning of his set, he finally made the national splash they'd all been working towards by the end. On the coattails of that success, several weeks later, he was back in San Francisco for sold-out shows at The Fillmore West.

Every year around Christmas, Otis would fill up his trunk with half-pint bottles of Scotch, drive over to Bellevue, park at a curb, pop open the back of his car, and people would line up to pick up a bottle of Scotch and catch up on old times.

Behind the Music has made an entire industry from the structure of this musical tale. Sex and drugs. Glamorous overspending. Bad decisions on a grand scale. Infidelity. Alienation from and amnesia towards the little people who had helped the musician through the lean years. It's reassuring to know that Otis wasn't a douche nozzle when he got a large taste of fame, even if it wasn't in his native country.

"When he came back home, it wasn't 'I'm different, I'm a star.' He didn't live that ego," Otis's wife, Zelma remembered. "He was just a down-to-earth, genuine, loving person. He had to see his friends and he had to visit the community where he grew up, because he had so much love for those people." Otis and Zelma would go on to co-write "I've Got Dreams to Remember" together.

In April of 1967, Otis answered James Brown's call by joining in on an initiative to integrate schools in the South. He worked very closely with Vice President Hubert Humphrey and Senator Baker from Tennessee on a stay-in-school project. Many Stax artists recorded a series of tracks designed to encourage black children to take their education as far as possible. Otis's cut, "Stay in School" had the highest profile and was the most successful: "But did you ever think about how square you look standing in an employment line because school didn't interest you?" For a man who had dropped out of school in tenth grade, Otis was wise enough to realize that not everyone else would have his graced opportunity or the privilege of his musical talent.

But it wasn't always about the kids or music. Every year around Christmas, Otis would fill up his trunk with half-pint bottles of Scotch, drive over to Bellevue, park at a curb, pop open the back of his car, and people would line up to pick up a bottle of Scotch and catch up on old times.

With his money, Otis bought a sprawling ranch outside of Macon. He built a house on the property for his parents. Inside the main house, he made a full-fledged recording studio that housed Big O Enterprises. He contracted the construction of the largest privately owned swimming pool in the state of Georgia. It was in the shape of a big "O." Otis purchased a Beechcraft airplane for \$200,000. It's not as ostentatious as it first sounds (except the fact that his name was painted on the side). It was, largely, a pragmatic decision. It gave Otis much more flexibility to set his own show schedules, cover much more ground in a short time, stay with his family as much as possible, and make his own travel arrangements. Plans were drawn

**Sunday, December 10, 1967
"He Looked Like He Was Taking a Little Nap"**

It was a weekend of gigs. Otis and The Bar-Kays, the band he traveled with when The MG's couldn't make the trip, were flying over the Midwest. Otis had recently discovered the Bar-Kays in Macon. "After our show he ran backstage, and said 'Y'all bad!'" recalled trumpeter Ben Cauley. "He asked about us doing some gigs. And we said, 'We're still in high school, so we can't go on weekdays.' He said, 'I'll take care of that. I'll pick you up in my plane on Fridays.'"

The weather in Madison, Wisconsin was far from optimum. It was very cold, rainy, and foggy. Otis Redding had kept a promise to himself. Ever since his first gig, he had never canceled one show. They were booked at The Factory, a white rock club. Otis had two shows to play, the first beginning at 6:30 PM. The opening act was a band from Rockford, Illinois called the Grim Reapers. They would later change their name a decade later and become Cheap Trick.

Otis was in the co-pilot's seat of his plane. Also in the plane were four of the five Bar-Kays (James Alexander was flying on another plane.) The oldest Bar-Kay was nineteen, the youngest seventeen. They were about four miles south of the airport, above Squaw Bay, and asked for clearance to land. Conditions were poor. According to an FAA spokesman, the plane was making its second attempt to land at the airport when it crashed.

At 3:27 PM, Ben Cauley was asleep in the backseat when he was awakened by a jolt. It felt as if the plane had hit a bump in the road. It began shaking and Ben suddenly felt a tremendous sensation of falling. One engine was grunting and growling. The other was dead altogether. At that moment, Bernard Reese was standing out in front of his house that sat on the shore of Lake Monona just outside Madison. He had heard the sputtering plane overhead and looked up in time to see it flash through the low clouds. It hit the water with a loud thud. About a half mile off the southeastern shore and three miles from the airport, the plane broke apart upon impact and began to sink.

Ben Cauley recalled that upon waking, he saw band mate Phalon Jones look out a window and say, "Oh, no!" Cauley then unbuckled his seat belt, and that was his final recollection before the plane went down. Ben was thrown from the cabin, instinctively grasping

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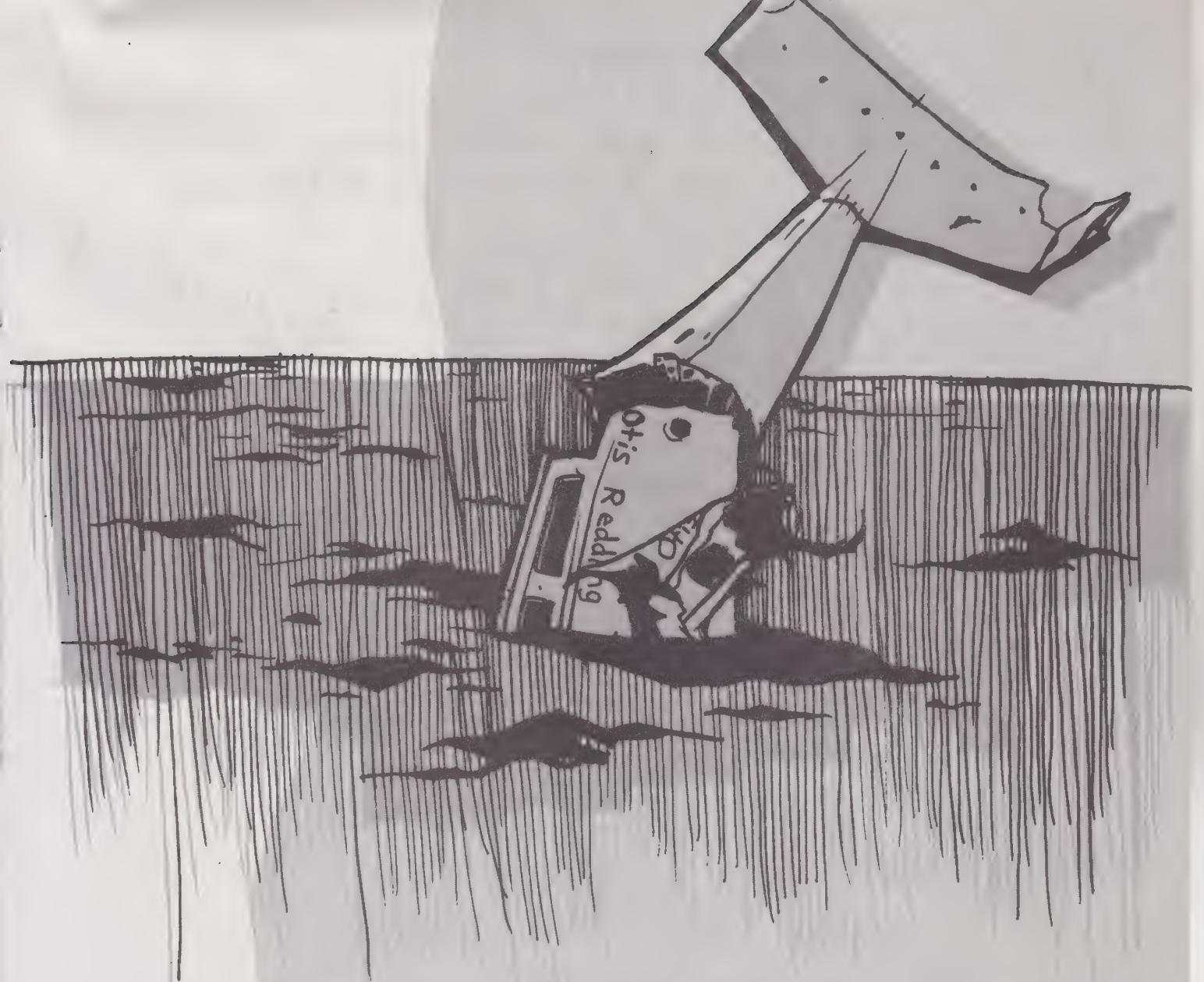


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a seat cushion to keep himself afloat. Ironically, he was the only one on the plane who didn't know how to swim. He was powerless to do anything except hear screams and cries for help. Later, he heard nothing but the quiet splashes of water against his ears. Curled around a seat cushion in the freezing water, he held on. Seventeen minutes later, a rescue boat reached the site and found debris. Just as Ben was slipping beneath the water, he was pulled to safety. Everybody else was dead. Pilot Richard Fraser and eighteen-year-old guitarist Jimmy Lee King were lifelessly floating on the surface.

A Coast Guard cutter brought the plane back to the surface. Inside, near the rear of the fuselage, was the body of Otis Redding. He was still strapped into his seat. "He looked like he was taking a little nap," said a rescue worker who helped pull him from the wreckage. The cause of the crash was never determined. Otis Redding died at twenty-six years old. Along with Otis, Phalon Jones, Carl Cunningham, Jimmy King, and Ronnie Caldwell, all perished.

None of the fans at The Factory knew the tragic news. An employee of the venue used a bullhorn to tell concert goers of the accident. "No one believed it, of course," Ken Adamany, the club owner, remembered. "It was in the era of students not trusting business people." Radio reports, however, confirmed the news. Police asked Adamany to have a show. He threw a free concert. "The news spread slowly," Rick Nielsen of the Grim Reapers said, "People were walking around in a daze. Instead of locked doors, we played."

December 10, 1967 was one day off from being exactly three years to the day Sam Cooke had died. Otis's last single when he was alive, "Shake," had been written by Sam Cooke. It had been Cooke's final single as well.

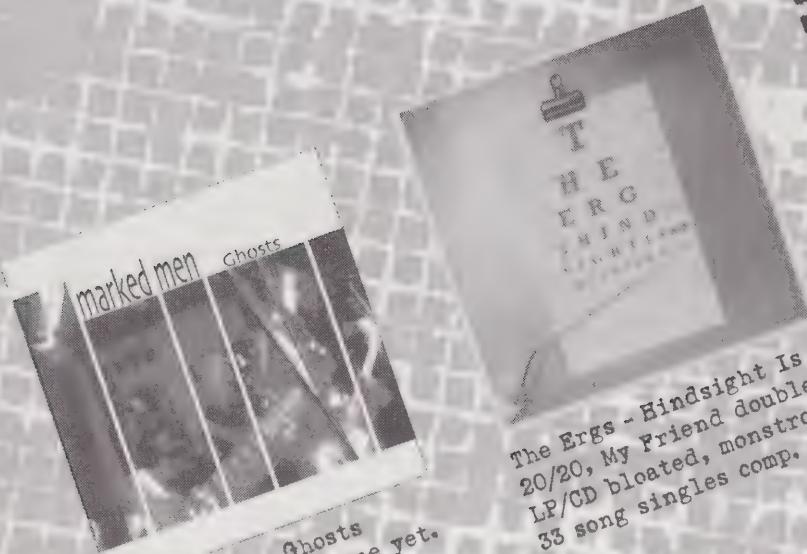
"My Original Feeling"

Three months after his breakthrough at Monterey and five years after his first R&B charting, leaving a recorded legacy that spanned a mere six years, Otis Redding was dead. Otis's body lay in state at the Macon City Auditorium, where 25,000 people viewed his body and 6,500 mourners attended the services. A Who's Who of soul paid their respects. Little Richard, Fats Domino, Wilson Pickett, Sam and Dave, Percy Sledge, Aretha Franklin, and Stevie Wonder all attended. It was reported that James Brown attempted to attend, but when he arrived, he was chased away by the Big O Ranch's gate man.

State Senator Leroy Johnson spoke at the service, revealing for the first time the contributions Otis Redding had made to scholarships for needy students and black voter-registration drives. It is also revealed that Otis had already laid plans to open a camp for underprivileged boys at his ranch. Vice President Hubert Humphrey sent his condolences: "The Death of Otis Redding was a great loss and a tragedy to the music world. His

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"Otis was the nicest person I ever met. He didn't have any vices, and he didn't have any faults, which is very unusual and sounds like you're making it up."

Steve Cropper

participation in the *Stay in School* album will be a worthwhile legacy to his memory and to the type of person he was."

Steve Cropper, guitarist for Booker T. & The MG's, poignantly remembered his friend and longtime creative partner.

"Otis was the nicest person I ever met. He didn't have any vices, and he didn't have any faults, which is very unusual and sounds like you're making it up. Everybody loved him. Kids gravitated to him. Women just worshipped the guy. His fans were unbelievable. He was a tall, good-looking guy and he sung his gazoo off, so why not? There are all stories about artists. They're always firing people and doing these crazy things. Otis wasn't one of those kind of people. He was always working, always on time, always together, loved everybody, made everybody feel great. He was like a country preacher, always wanting to help people out and always paying people compliments.... My original feeling for Otis wound up being my final feeling for Otis. He was a pure man. Anything you say about him has to be good. He was a good person."

Bittersweet #1

The opening lines to "(Sitting on) the Dock of the Bay" are eerie and prophetic. "I roamed 2,000 miles away from Georgia/ Never to go back home again." The song, unintentionally, became Otis's *memento mori*, something that reminds people of their mortality. The song was recorded only three days prior to his death. It was a departure for those who had followed Otis from the start. It was wistful, full of quiet yearning and easy satisfaction. It was also highly personal.

Steve Cropper dealt with Otis's death by working. While search and rescue crews had been combing Lake Monona for Otis's body, Steve escaped to the studio to mix "Dock of the Bay." That afternoon he had gone over to a little jingle studio and found a sound-effects tape with seagulls and crashing waves. "The toughest part was," Steve remembered, "they hadn't even found Otis yet. And there I am, working on a song."

Otis had built up so much momentum. "Dock of the Bay" was released the next month, on January 8, 1968. It was Otis's breakthrough, his "career" song. The record shot up the charts. It reached #1 on both the pop and R&B charts for the week of March 16 and stayed there for four consecutive weeks. It was his first #1 single and first million-seller. Otis was posthumously awarded a "Best R&B song" and "Best R&B performance" at the eleventh Grammy awards.

"Dock of the Bay" wasn't all that Otis had in the bin before his untimely demise. He had recorded massive amount of studio material in late 1967, just before his death. Three complete studio albums: *The Immortal Otis Redding*, *Love Man*, and *Tell the Truth* were released one at a time between 1968 and 1970.

Fine Print Devil

Stax's biggest cheerleader in the early days had been Jerry Wexler of Atlantic Records. Stax's owner, James Stewart, considered Jerry a close friend and based a lot of faith that although he'd signed a contract, Jerry's handshake and personal assurance that there was nothing tricky in the contract was why he ended up distributing all Stax/Volt releases with Atlantic. Shortly before Otis's death, Atlantic Records was purchased by Warner Bros. This business move, far outside of Stewart's control, revealed that deep in the Stax/Atlantic distribution contract that Stewart had unknowingly signed away the rights to the original master recordings for all of Stax's present and future recordings. The executives at

Warner refused to renegotiate the contract or to return ownership of the Stax masters. Unable to regain the rights to their recordings, Stax severed their relationship with Atlantic.

In an effort to save the Stax ship, the dismayed Stewart signed a contract with Gulf-Western (a hybrid energy/entertainment business), which was then quickly gobbled up by Paramount Pictures. Booker T. was unimpressed by Stewart's gambit, saying it was "the type of mentality that comes into the United States when a company developed a new machine, a new technology, and became really large." Stax, although it would go through several more incarnations, was never the same. As was believed during his lifetime, Otis had turned out to be the heart and soul of Stax. Within two years, most of the original house musicians had left.

Dreams to Remember

Today, Otis Redding is well remembered in his home state of Georgia. Resolutions were passed through the Georgia Senate and House of Representatives unanimously praising his accomplishments. The mayor of Macon, Georgia has declared September 12 as "Otis Redding Day." In Macon, you can cross the Otis Redding Memorial Bridge or gaze at a seven-foot-tall bronze statue (just a little bigger than life size) of Otis. In 2008, Otis's family launched the Big O Youth Educational Dream Foundation, whose mission is to carry on Redding's desire to empower young people and encourage their confidence and interest in education through music and the arts.

Otis is laid to rest in a tomb on his private ranch in Round Oak, Georgia, twenty-three miles north of Macon. Otis's grave site is in the front yard of his house, just a few feet to the left of the driveway and impossible not to see from the kitchen window or dining room. "He wanted to be buried here at the ranch," Zelma said. "It never bothers me having him there." It is within hearing distance of his father's church.

Zelma never remarried.

Suggested Listening

For a great start and an overview of Otis to see if you'll dig his work, I suggest the relatively easy to find double LP: *The Best of Otis Redding*. (There are a ton of different comps out there.) If you enjoy that, all of his studio albums that were recorded at Stax come highly recommended:

Pain in My Heart

The Great Otis Redding

Sings Soul Ballads

Otis Blue

The Soul Album

Complete & Unbelievable: The Otis Redding Dictionary of Soul

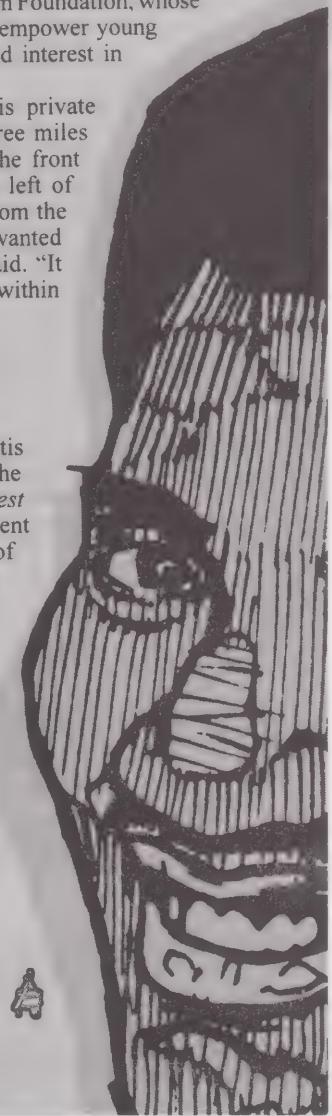
King & Queen with Carla Thomas

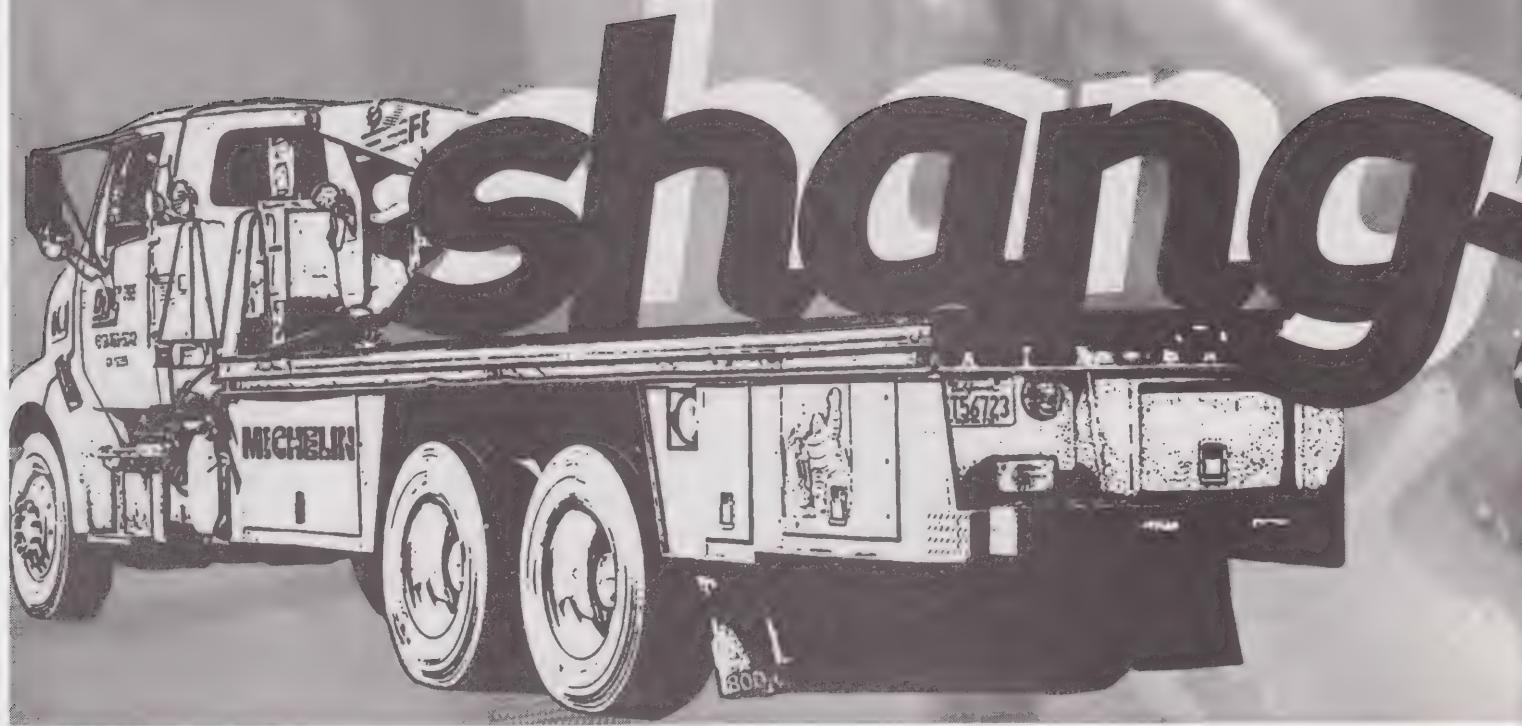
The Dock of the Bay

The Immortal Otis Redding

Love Man

Tell the Truth





Interview by Daryl Gussin
photos by Todd Taylor & Danny Bengston
art junk by Amy Adoyzie

Partying with your friends is way better than partying by yourself.

Chris · vocals, guitar
Andy · drums
Tommy · vocals, guitar
Tucker · bass

One of the more confirming things about DIY punk rock is that awesome bands seldom come out of nowhere. LPs might be preceded by 7"s, which will have been built on the backs of friendships, shared experiences, and mutual respect.

When a band like Shang-A-Lang starts to play shows, tour, and release records, you can be sure there's a trail of hard work behind them. Shows have been set up, long drives have been made. With the friends they've made this way, it becomes more apparent why they do what they do.

Think of the culturally out-of-touch pop melodies of The Bananas and The Marked Men. Have them sharing a bottle with the beat-down-yet-unbroken tales of Tiltwheel and The Tim Version. Catch them up in a high speed pursuit towards the Mexican border with This Bike Is A Pipebomb and you have the heart, balls, and brains of this band we call Shang-A-Lang. This interview was conducted in a Holiday Inn hotel room on the Saturday of Fest VII after I had spent a week with them and a handful (a very large handful) of their friends touring across the South en route to Gainesville.

Shang-A-Lang is responsible for some of the most cherished, scrappy, DIY Southwest pop punk in recent years and you couldn't find more solid dudes to root for.

Daryl: Have you guys been interviewed before?

Tucker: The Answer Lies [Chris and Andy's old band] had been interviewed.

Chris: I don't think Shang-A-Lang has been interviewed.

Tucker: We were kinda interviewed by some European zine.

Chris: Oh yeah. We were outside a venue in Atlanta. This guy cornered me and talked to me about how he ran the largest zine in Germany.

Daryl: Trust?

Chris: It might have been. So, maybe?

Daryl: Was he just talking to you or was it an actual interview?

Chris: It was an interview.

Tommy: It was recorded.

Daryl: Have you seen this interview?

Tommy: No.

Andy: This may not have actually happened. [Laughs]

TODD TAYLOR

Daryl: Is there a way to give all of your personal band histories and how the four of you ended up in this band together?

Andy: Chris and I used to play together. And then... I don't know. We knew Tommy from other bands and we knew Tucker from The Farm (The Farm was a house in Las Cruces that used to have shows.).

Chris: I think what happened was that Andy and I were playing in The Answer Lies. Every song that I was writing was a pop punk song and I knew that that wouldn't fly.

Andy: Yeah, Jason wanted to play metal or something.

Chris: So we decided to start a side project and the Answer Lies quickly imploded. And Shang-A-Lang became our only project.

Daryl: But you're all from different cities, right?

Tucker: No, we're all originally from Cruces. Well, we were all from Las Cruces when Shang-A-Lang was formed.

Tommy: There was a time when Andy moved to Kansas and I moved to Portland, Oregon, and we just did this band long distance.

Daryl: And from what I understand, living in different cities has helped the band?

Tommy: Oddly enough, I think it has.

Chris: I think, as far as touring, we figured we're all long distance and we wanna keep doing this. So we could meet where ever we want to and we could play. Andy and Tommy would come in for the weekend and we'd be rushing to record songs.

Tommy: Which was weird because we'd be recording songs that we'd forget about later.

Andy: "Dude, what song is that?"

Tommy: "Learn this song, record it."

Andy: I'd hear the drum track and that would be it.

Tommy: We went on a tour of the Midwest and Kansas was our first stop. We showed Andy some songs, recorded them, and that was that.

Chris: And our first show was Minneapolis, twenty-two hours away from Las Cruces, New Mexico.

Daryl: What did those songs go on?

Chris: That was the Jonesin' split and the Brickfight split that's coming out. And then they came back into town. When did we record the Turkish Techno split?

Tommy: In May.

Chris: Oh, yeah. Tommy flew back into town for his sister's graduation. So Andy came to town to play some shows and record some songs.

Daryl: So is it kind of a big deal when Shang-A-Lang plays in Las Cruces?

Chris: Actually, in Las Cruces, I would say that's made it more fun. I mean, being in The Answer Lies, we played every punk show 'cause we were the only punk band.

Andy: People still looked forward to it.

Chris: I know, but after a while it was a chore.

Tommy: I remember seeing The Answer Lies every week.

Andy: Sometimes a couple times a week. It was pretty saturated.

Chris: I think we played all but one University House show.

Tommy: They were pretty much the default opener for every single band.

Chris: So now when Shang-A-Lang plays Las Cruces, it's more of an event. And it's more fun for me because it's exciting.

Tommy: It's a rare occurrence.

Daryl: It took more work to actually happen.

Tommy: Yeah.

Daryl: Is it pretty safe to say that's how most of the Shang-A-Lang material is recorded? How long are you usually in town together?

Tommy: It's usually a weekend.

Andy: Weekend warriors!

Chris: What usually happens is I write about ten songs and Tommy writes a few songs and we come together and see which ones work and record them all. Then we do the rest of the work when these guys leave. And then I'm kind of like, "That didn't work at all."

Andy: "We're gonna have to redo that one."

Chris: I've almost put stuff on records and then I'll listen to it and it's just like, "No."

Andy: "Let's re-record that next year."

Tommy: And we'll also take songs from solo acoustic stuff. Chris and I did a dual solo acoustic tour a couple years ago and we're able to take songs that we did back then and translate them into band songs.

Chris: And Tommy plays in Crowsfeet and we take all his songs. [Laughs]

Daryl: Chris, why do you say you'll never do a solo acoustic tour again?

Chris: I think the vibe's weird. It's really nerve racking for me. I like having a lot of noise and other people to fuck up.

Andy: It's pretty self-indulgent, too. Look at me! [Laughs]

Daryl: Tommy, why do you like it?

Tommy: I like it 'cause it's pretty nerve racking.

Chris: So you like it for the same reason that I hate it?

Tommy: I think I actually do, 'cause I like the idea that it makes me a lot more nervous. It seems to be more important. It's more pressure. When you compare that to a Shang-A-Lang show, I'm probably having more fun at a Shang-A-Lang show because it's more lively and loud. But it doesn't necessarily have that introspective feel.

Andy: Plus partying with your friends is way better than partying by yourself.

Tommy: Yeah, definitely, but I also enjoy solo touring.

Chris: I enjoy soloing.

Tommy: Yeah, I like shredding.

[Laughs]

Daryl: Do you play many shows as Crowsfeet?

Tommy: Occasionally, yeah. If I'm able to play with a musician that I really like, I see that as a rare treat. I'm not really sure where I wanna take it. They're just very raw songs that I only play every now and then.

Daryl: So you're saying that you like to get into shows for free?

Tommy: [Laughs] Yeah, when there's someone really awesome and I don't have twelve dollars.

Chris: That's why I play shows and book shows. Honestly.

Daryl: Can anybody think of the last thing they had to hit?

Andy: I had to hit a bong. [Laughs]

Chris: I punched Walker in the face last year at Fest for making me miss the Arrivals. True story.

Tucker: You were hitting me pretty hard last night.

Chris: Was I? Sorry.

Tommy: I like to hit the road pretty hard.

Andy: Hit it like it owes you money?

Daryl: After five 7"s, which one do you think your favorite is?

Chris: The first one, hands down.

Andy: Error?

Chris: Yes, I love that record.

Daryl: Why?

Chris: I think it sounds good. Everything we've recorded has been on a 4-track, and I brought a 4-track to practice and was like, "Let's do this." And I had no clue what I was doing. It's like the more I know about recording, the worse they get.

Tucker: I don't think the quality of recording gets worse. I think it's the...

Chris: Quality of songs?

Tucker: No, the playing.

Chris: Maybe.

Tommy: We get drunker.

Andy: I think my favorite is probably the first one or... uh... I actually haven't heard any of them. [Laughs]

Tommy: Yeah, I don't have a record player so... [Laughs] I really like the Jonesin' split. I think both bands sound really good on it and it seemed like a really lively recording. Everything seems more turned up.

Daryl: Could there also be something else to the Jonesin' split because it was released when you both went on tour together?

Tommy: Yeah, it was a moment in time.

Chris: I had been talking to Mike forever about doing an East Coast tour, and he runs Dead Broke Records and I run Dirt Cult, so it was just like, "Let's do a split label, split 7" for the tour."

[Kyle, a tour companion of Shang-A-Lang comes into the room and starts ranting.]

Andy: Shut up Kyle.

Kyle: Why are you telling me to shut up?

Tucker: 'Cause there's an interview

Kyle: [Laughs]

Chris: You will forever go down on tape—as a douche bag! [Laughs] I like the four-way split, 'cause Gordon Gano's Army, Dude Jams, and Dan Padilla are on it. And they rule.

Daryl: Do you have a favorite 7" Tucker?

Tucker: Not necessarily. I think the reception from the *Summertime 7"* was...

Chris: The critically acclaimed.

Tommy: It was definitely most loved.

Tucker: Even though Tommy is not on it; in spirit he's still on those recordings.

Daryl: Which 7"s are Tommy on?

Chris: Tommy is on all of them except *Summertime* and the *Sex Advice* split. And that was just us being assholes, I guess.

Tommy: More or less. There was a point where I was just fucking broke. I was in Oregon and there was no way to get down. I didn't have time to do a month-long hitch.

Chris: That was when Tucker joined the band.

Tommy: Somewhat of a crucial point. I actually played bass on the *Error 7*. With the Sex Advice split and the *Summertime 7*, Tucker played bass, and, when I came back, Chris and I talked about it and decided that it would be cool to have two guitars and just see how that goes. And it turned out to sound pretty good, I guess.

Chris: Now we can do wailin' solos.

Tommy: Now we can shred! At this point, this is the line-up.

Daryl: I feel like I have a pretty good grasp of other projects that you're all in, like the Band of Enchantment—where Tucker plays a fuckin' mandolin—and Jon Lovitz which is Andy and Tommy, but is there something else that people might not know about which you do musically?

Andy: I play the trouser flute.

Tommy: We're pretty good with the skin flute.

Tucker: Currently, I think I'm in eight bands.

Tommy: He's a bit of a whore.

Andy: Tucker wins.

Daryl: What are they?

Tucker: Lots of acoustic, folk, bluegrass, rootsy kind of stuff.

Daryl: What's the average age of people who you play in these bands with?

Andy: Eighty.

Tucker: There's one group where both of them are fifty. It's just the three of us. The average age is somewhere around twenty-five.

Daryl: How did you get into playing acoustic folk music?

Tucker: I got a mandolin for Christmas. I just kinda wanted to pick up a new instrument. And this guy, D.S. Yancey, came to town and played a show. He stayed at the house. The night before we had gone out to see a movie and I had said something about having my mandolin and he said, "You should pull it out. We'll mess around and we'll see how it goes."

Andy: [Laughs] "You should pull it out, we'll mess around."

Chris: [Laughs] And we've toured ever since.

Tucker: The rest is history. I started with him. I knew BBR, which is the two older people.

They couldn't keep hiring their musicians, so they couldn't keep the band together. They wanted me to play bass for them. I've known them for a pretty long time, from back when I was setting up benefit shows and having them play.

Daryl: What were the benefits for?

Tucker: We did a tsunami relief benefit for the Thailand tsunami. A benefit was for a friend of mine who got kicked in the face and he needed to have reconstructive surgery. The doctors were amazed that he even lived. I kinda got my start from putting on local benefit shows.

Daryl: That's cool, and it seems really different from what else I heard: that you used to be in a really rippin' AC/DC cover band.

Tucker: I'm still in that band. The guys just moved back to Cruces from San Diego.

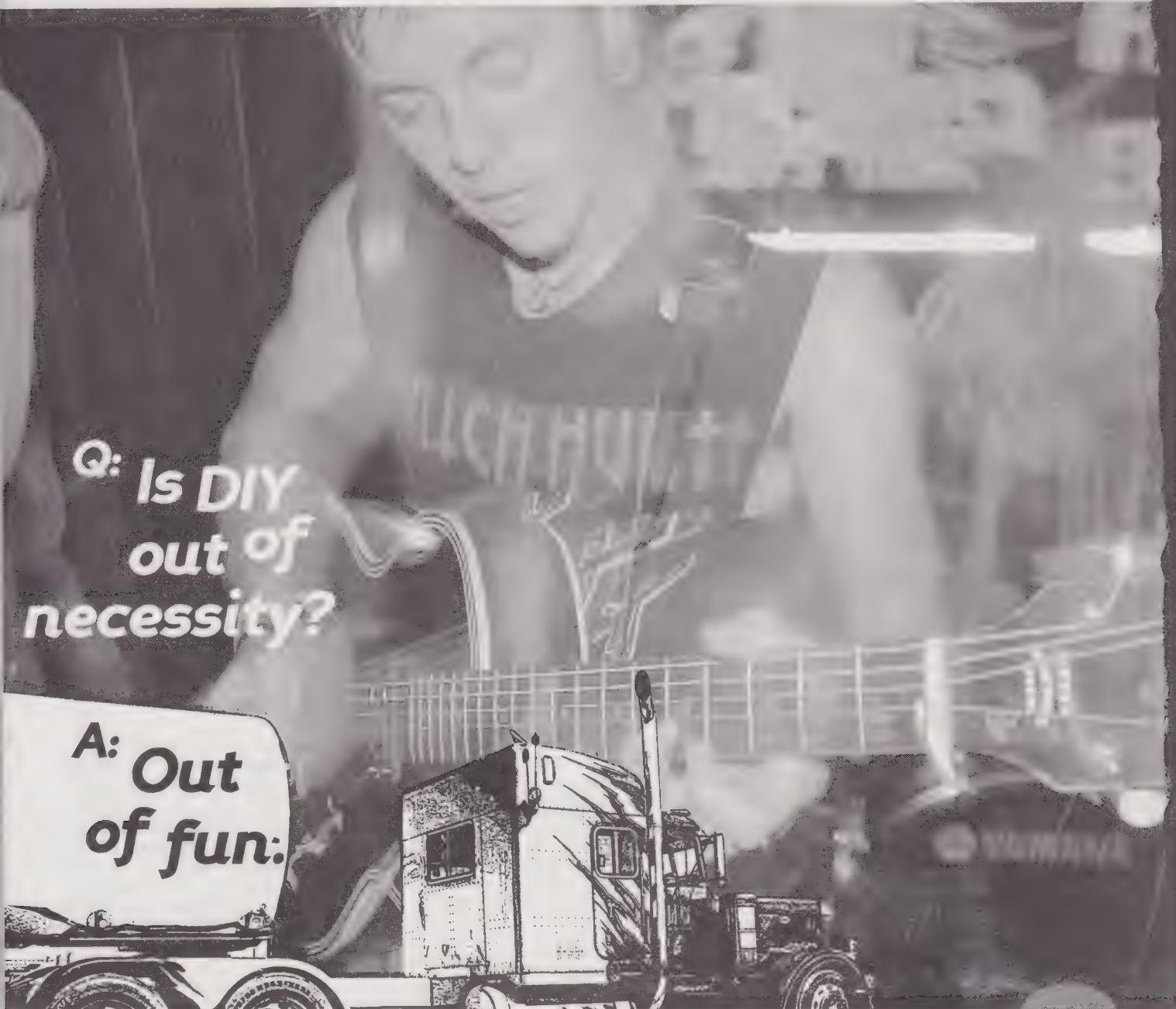
Chris: He also once played mandolin for Andrew Jackson Jihad under the stars of Las Cruces, New Mexico. It was beautiful.

Daryl: It sounds like a magical moment for all.

TODD TAYLOR

Q: Is DIY
out of
necessity?

A: Out
of fun.



Chris: I was drunk.

Andy: I just went from six to midnight.

Daryl: What's the fanciest equipment Shang-A-Lang has ever recorded on?

Chris: Tascam 4-track? [Laughs]

Daryl: Is that with two inputs or four?

Chris: Four, but I only use one.

Tommy: It goes through a mixer first.

Chris: I broke my 4-track and bought a new one, the same model. I broke it because I was recording someone while really drunk and I jumped up to turn off a light with the headphones on.

Tucker: I think the mics are fancier than the recording unit.

Chris: I got some nice condenser mics. It's all about the mics. I always wondered how people got good 4-track sounds, and I was always trying to do it with Radio Shack mics.

Tommy: The mics are what's to thank for any clarity that might be found on the recording.

Chris: Which may or may not exist.

Daryl: So pretty much all of them have been self-recorded on a 4-track.

Tucker: Yeah.

Daryl: Is this DIY out of necessity?

Andy: Out of fun.

Chris: Well, yes and no. There's nowhere in Las Cruces that I would want to record a record at.

Daryl: Why? What are the places like?

Chris: I don't even know.

Tucker: A lot of them do digital recordings and we didn't want to do that.

Tommy: They all just sound too clean and polished.

Chris: The Answer Lies were gonna record at this one place and this guy was like, "Yeah man, I'm getting this commercial sound down. I've been listening to a lot of Tool." It's just like, no.

Tommy: A lot of the bands that we like recorded on 4-tracks. For whatever reason, we just like that sound.

Andy: I love the way the Knockout Pills stuff sounds, and that's what Travis (Spillers, bass player/ vocalist of the Knockout Pills) used to record on. Kinda grainy, a little distorted.

Chris: It's also awesome because we can write and record a song. I think that's why we have so much recorded, because it's so easy.

Tucker: We can go at our own pace. You can make it sound how you want it to sound.

Chris: And you can bring all your friends over and make them go, "Wow oh oh."

Daryl: Who are some of your favorite current bands?

Andy: Let me look at *Razorcake* real quick. [Laughs] Screaming Females last night were so fucking bad ass. They fucking wailed. They're at the top of my heap right now. They blew me away. That girl sings so nice and rips shit up on her guitar. Ninja Gun was bad ass last night, too.

Tommy: Mehgago NT, man.

Chris: He's not asking who was awesome last night.

Tucker: But open up the Fest book and that's who we're into right now.

Chris: I fucking hate punk rock.

Daryl: You can tell.

[Laughs]

Daryl: I have a question and I don't know if you can answer it, but on the insert of the *Summertime 7*, there are some things that are blacked out. I was wondering if you knew what it said or why they're blacked out.

Chris: Pete (of Let's Pretend Records) did that. I think he just did that 'cause it looks cool.

Tommy: I wasn't on that one. I wouldn't know. [Laughs]

Chris: I think it says, "Where's Tommy?"

Tommy: "What's going on here?"

Daryl: Do you have any grasp on how most people have heard of you?

Tommy: Not really.

Chris: I honestly have no clue. We self-release our records, so I know where our records go. It's really weird when you're in Chicago and everyone's singing your words and you're just like, "Who the fuck are you?"

Tommy: It's also through friends having distros.

Chris: Naw, I think it's just through Mitch Clem. I'm gonna give him all the credit.

Tommy: Anytime Mitch says anything.

Chris: "Oh, a thousand plays on myspace. Mitch must have said something about Shang-A-Lang today."

Daryl: I think that's the first place I heard of you.

Tommy: Really? [Laughs]

Andy: Thanks Mitch. We love you!

Daryl: Do you ever see any turnover from The Answer Lies?

Chris: The thing with The Answer Lies is that we never really fit in to the scene we were playing with.

Andy: Remember that one show in Philly with Artimus Pyle and Sunday Morning Einsteins?

Chris: Yeah, and then we'd turn around and go play with Dan Padilla or the Chinese Telephones. We never quite fit in, unless we were playing with Shark Pants and then it didn't matter because they rule, and I was watching Shark Pants. And I was ripping off all their riffs.

[Laughs]

Tommy: Now we know.

Chris: Actually, it was kind of awkward. "Sorry Isaac, here's a song you wrote."

Andy: The Answer Lies was just so weird musically. Akiko's songs we're so Japanese, if that's an adjective. [Laughs] I don't know, like, "flower sky tree bird."

Chris: Didn't she have a song about an ice cream cone?

Andy: Yeah. She had a song about ice cream melting in her car. None of us could have ever written those songs. That was something special that Ikeko brought to the band. But that was just one of the things that made that band a little eclectic.

Chris: We never knew what we wanted. I'm a little more focused now. I know what Capitol Records wants to hear, and we're shooting for it. [Laughs]

Tommy: We're aiming for the top. What is it? Multi-platinum and then uranium hits?

Andy: I think it's actually enriched uranium.

Chris: I think Capitol Records and Epic want shitty 4-track recordings.

Tommy: It's like that Guided By Voices thing, where he'll be forwarded thousands of dollars...

Chris: He was given \$100,000 to record and went out to Walgreens and bought two cassette tapes.

Tommy: And split the money among the band. And Guided By Voices are loved just as well.

Andy: Where did I get this koozie?
[Laughs]

Andy: I thought it was the Jonesin' koozie and then I was like "This doesn't say Jonesin' on it anywhere." It's a pretty cool koozie, but I have no idea where it came from. Sorry.

Daryl: How excited is the rest of the band that Chris runs Dirt Cult Records?

Andy: Chris rules.

Tucker: I always offer my help but he doesn't want it.

Tommy: I don't really want to run a record label, but I like having a friend who does.

Andy: I'm vewy pwoud of him. My little boy is gwoing up.

Daryl: Chris, how excited are you about your label?

Chris: So excited.

Tommy: Fuckin'-a! Think about excited and put "so" in front of it. [Laughs]

Chris: I've wanted to do it since I was fourteen-years-old. And then I did it.

Andy: Chris had a dream and he grabbed it by the balls! And he put those balls in his mouth and he just started sucking.

Tommy: Way to go Chris.

Daryl: What's the most rewarding thing?

Chris: Ah...

Andy: All the pussy. [Laughs]

Chris: That pretty much sums it up. No, it's putting out my friends' bands because my friends' bands are the best bands in the world, and then I get to put out their record. I don't know; I love going to the post office?

Andy: I love the way the post office smells.

Chris: The most rewarding thing is that the people at the post office love me to death. They fucked up my money order one day and the postal women showed up at my house later...

Andy: Armed to the teeth.

Chris: To say, "Chris, I'm sorry I fucked up. You're gonna have to come by tomorrow." And I'm like, "How do you know where I live?" And she's like, "I work at the post office. I know where everyone lives." [Laughs]

Daryl: So what's the hardest thing about it?

Chris: I don't know. I don't think any of it's very hard. I think it's all really fun. I just sit down and listen to records and pack up records. I guess it's money. And it's the fact that when I get drunk, I start promising people things; and I'm the kind of person where if I promise you something, I'm going to do it. So if I get really drunk like I did at Awesome Fest and tell seven



DANNY BENGSTON

Andy: Dude, we smell bad.
Chris: But Tommy smells worse.

awesome bands I can put out their records, I'm gonna do it. I don't know where the money is gonna come from.

Daryl: Andy, you're a tattoo artist, right?

Andy: I used to work in a shop for a while, but I'm not really interested in working in a shop anymore. Making something your job kind of sucks the fun out of it sometimes. I'd rather it just be a hobby and work on friends and do tattoos that I enjoy doing instead of doing tattoos that I feel I have to do to pay the rent.

Chris: Marvin the Martian with a flaming basketball.

Andy: Yeah, I don't wanna do any star tattoos.

Chris: Kermit the frog with a stethoscope.

Andy: I don't wanna do anything tribal.

Daryl: So you have that skill and I know, Chris, you're a social worker.

Chris: I'm a therapist, social worker, whatever.

Daryl: What do you do?

Chris: I work on an adolescent acute unit in a psychiatric hospital. Counseling kids and families and stuff like that.

Andy: Heavy.

Chris: I'm kinda bummed now.

Andy: It's where the inspiration comes from.

Chris: It's why I drink so much.

Daryl: Tommy and Tucker, what about you?

Tucker: Whatever it takes to get by so we can continue to do this.

Tommy: More or less. Any under the table job. I have no fucking clue what I want to do as a career.

Andy: I'm not sure if there's anything I want to do for an extended period of time.

Daryl: Who's the biggest hippie in Shang-A-Lang?

Andy: Tucker.

Chris: Tucker.

Tucker: I'm bohemian.

Chris: Actually, I would say it's Tommy.

Tommy: I'm just a crusty piece of shit.

Chris: Tommy smells bad.

Andy: Dude, we all smell bad.

Chris: But Tommy smells worse.

Daryl: Don't you work at a natural food co-op?

Chris: Well, I'm on the board, good point. I hang out with hippies at the board

meetings. Where they go, "My energy is about to leave the room, so I just wanted to wish everyone a fine day."

Andy: "Namaste." [Laughs]

Chris: That's all true, but I think it's Tommy.

Daryl: Who do you think it is, Tommy?

Tommy: I don't really shower that much.

Chris: What's the criteria for being a hippie?

Daryl: Criteria?

Chris: Who likes Phish?

[Silence]

Chris: Who likes the Grateful Dead?

[Silence]

Tucker: Who smokes pot?

Andy: I do!

Everyone: Andy is the hippie.

Andy: Just 'cause you smoke pot doesn't make you a hippie. Snoop Dogg's not a hippie.

Chris: Dude, Snoop Dogg is such a hippie. [Laughs]

IT'S CASUAL



DONOTHEDAD

I will cop to being jaded. In a few short months I turn a spry forty, and have been listening to music all my life. How can anyone not be jaded after so many years? I know you're jaded as well. It's all right. We're all sort of friends here. So I'm getting more and more picky about my likes and dislikes. I just can't be a cheerleader for mediocrity these days. Let someone else do that. There's a lot of "just okay" out there. Perhaps too much. Then you have a smattering of bands who blow minds and remind you why you have lived your life, in some shape or form, in pursuit of hearing great music. Seeing It's Casual has reminded me why music is awesome and something worth staying up for late at night, witnessing it in some small club. This is a duo that delivers! Sonically, and in their live performance as well. Heavy rock that recalls late period Black Flag and early Bl'ast. And those are two bands I don't use for comparison lightly.

The following interview went down at the Relax restaurant in Hollywood, CA.

Eddie - guitar, vocals / W.C.E. - drums

Interview by Matt Average and Donofthedead / Layout by Daryl Gussin

M.Avg: You have a pretty good work ethic.
Eddie: Always practicing. Always writing. We have like forty new songs that aren't even recorded. You listen to all three records, *Buicregl, Stop Listening to Bad Music, The New Los Angeles*, to me, it's an excellent progression. If you listen to them in a row, the musicianship progressively gets better. It gets more intense, too.

Donofthedead: Also, the key is you're growing together where you're instinctually playing as opposed to playing as separate entities. You put the time in, the songs get stronger. You get to know how to challenge each other.

Eddie: Exactly. We know our limitations. I know what he (W.C.E.) doesn't like to do, and he knows what I don't like to do. He plays drums, and I play guitar and sing. But I want to be fair and give him a voice too. He's capable of writing songs too. Two songs on *The New Los Angeles* are his. Of the forty new songs, twenty are his and twenty are mine. His are more of the straight hard rock style. Mine are more of the punky *The New Los Angeles* style stuff.

W.C.E.: We've just been consistent. I feel like the best is yet to come. We definitely haven't hit our peak. That's the scary thing. Every time we rehearse, the stuff we haven't even played is more like *The New Los Angeles* but heavier and fun. I'm like, "Fuck I can't wait to record this!"

M.Avg: So, what is "The New Los Angeles"? Not the album, but the expression.

Eddie: I was born and raised in Los Angeles. So was he. One day I was driving through downtown; I went to a Dodgers game with my parents. My parents were reminiscing

on downtown L.A. It was really funny because we stopped and had lunch at that place Phillip's, right by Union Station. We left our car at the Norwalk metro station and took the Green Line to Union Station. We got off and walked out from the Union Station, across the street towards Phillip's, and this lady, from out of town, she came up to us, "Hey, do you speak English?" I'm like, "Yeah! Of course. Why?" She's like, "Because everyone I'm asking directions; no one speaks English." [laughter] My mom is like, "Wow, that's amazing." She goes, "I remember when downtown was so classy. Like you could go to department stores and there would be an elevator guy." The sixties. I'm looking at them, thinking, this is the new Los Angeles. People from out of town are asking if people speak English. Because no one speaks it. So I came up with that term: This is the New Los Angeles. I'm not saying it's good or bad. I'm of Mexican descent. I'm just saying it's a fact.

M.Avg: It is what it is.

Eddie: It is what it is!

M.Avg: When I think of the New Los Angeles... I drove from downtown one day, from the 101 over into the Valley and I just saw construction. I've lived here for only eleven years. But in those eleven years, this is still like a different city right now. Los Angeles had a certain feel to it. And now it's a different city.

Eddie: It is. I think it's exciting. More people, more expansion. Everything is a big production. If you want to go somewhere, there's construction. It's a big thing.

M.Avg: You can't escape it. You go down

It's Casual take those influences and mix them up with some other influences and create something of their own. You can hear the progression on each of their three LPs. With each record, the playing gets heavier and tighter. So one can only imagine what the next record will be like. Then you have the live aspect of the show. They follow the Dukowski philosophy of even if you're only playing in front of two people, you still play like there are five hundred people there to see you. It's pretty obvious during their first song that these guys want to be on stage. None of that half assed "we-haven't-practiced-in-a-month-even-though-we-have-this-show-to-play" garbage too many bands pull. I've caught about four to five shows this past year and have yet to be disappointed. It's seeing them that gets me stoked on seeing live music again. They're loud, sonic, and fun as hell.

one street, there's construction. You go down another and there's construction.

Eddie: It's pretty intense, man. Everyone's here. Everyone from New York is here. Everyone from Europe is here. It's movies, it's music, television, art, it's skateboarding. I think L.A. is the best. It's the best weather. You can snowboard in February at Mountain High. You can surf in the morning and get an early evening [snowboarding] session at Mountain High. And the climates are what they are supposed to be in each region, and they're an hour and a half away. That's L.A. And it feels right. I think it's an exciting time. The New Los Angeles. The last four years, I've been working at Southern Lord. I choose to take public transportation from my house to my job because it's just one bus downtown to the subway, and it lets me off right here (in Hollywood). I save a lot of money, and I see more. I've been so amazed by what I've seen. Good and bad.

M.Avg: What are some of the interesting things that you've seen?

Eddie: I've seen some of the stupidest of the stupid happen. Like the things you think you would see happen happen. Like a semi homeless guy—all of a sudden—at the back of the bus just start changing clothes. Butt naked in the back, and there are women and children on the bus. It's like, "What the fuck are you doing? C'mon dude." I had to step in and defend a female a couple weeks ago on the Red Line. This past month it's been crazy on the subway coming in (to Hollywood). There was an African-American chick sitting down. She was mid-20s, looks like she was going to LACC (Los Angeles City College), a student. She was

sitting there, and she was, uh, very well endowed. These two guys were drunk and very close to her looking at her breasts. I'm standing there with my skateboard and my laptop bag at ten in the morning coming to work. She's sitting there, and one guy is bending his body over half way, at a ninety degree angle. I go, "Hey man, why don't you leave the girl alone? She's going to school. She doesn't want to be harassed." She goes, "It's alright." I go, "You know, no it's not all right." Because if it was my mom, or my sister, or a female friend, I wouldn't want them to be harassed. I decided that was it. They were drunk in the morning. It almost got physical. I was like, "You know, dude, I do have a problem with you. But I got too much to fucking lose right now. I'm not going to ruin what I have right now over having friction with you. It's ridiculous."

Then I see a full-on fist fight last week. For the first time. It was girl and a guy fighting. A couple. Ghetto drama. He started hitting her. This guy jumped up and got the guy and wrestled him down. Where the doors open, the girl's foot got caught in that little space between the subway and the platform. All of this drama, and she's going to get her fucking leg torn off right now, that's all I thought. So I got up and ran out and told the driver, "Don't go. A woman's leg is caught." Luckily, the subway was stalled. I was like, "Dude, call the fucking cops. Two dudes are fighting and this lady's leg is caught." That's the crazy shit I've seen. And it's all been in this past month.

M.Avrg: What's the coolest thing you've seen?
Eddie: I think the coolest thing I've seen on the Red Line, is half a car all joined in a conversation on how public transportation has been saving them time, money, and wear and tear on their car.

W.C.E.: I heard the exact same when I was coming here a few months ago. A lot of people—it was their first time taking the Red Line—and they were just amazed. These are your average middle class suburban folks who have lived in cities that the metro system doesn't service. They said they drive their cars to the Pasadena station. "It's the first time we've ever taken public transportation and it's wonderful! How come we've never taken this before?" A lot of people in Los Angeles don't realize we have a subway system. Those who live in the city do. But those who live in Los Angeles County, the outlying areas, they don't. If they do, they don't ever think about utilizing it. When they finally have, you should see their eyes light up! There was a group of middle-aged women, all in their forties and fifties. They came to L.A. on the subway. They came out here to have a good time, a night on the town. They were just amazed. Everybody started extolling the virtues of riding public trans. It looked like a big Metro commercial or something. [laughter]

M.Avrg: Traffic is starting to be a tad bit lighter.
Eddie: My sister and I live in the same apartment complex, and she's been out

of town, so my younger brother has been staying at her place. He offered me a ride (into town) yesterday, and Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday. "You want a ride into Hollywood?" "Sure, if you're volunteering, cool." Guess how long it took me everyday to get in? An hour and twenty minutes! When I take one bus and one subway, it takes one hour and fifteen minutes. He volunteered, but if I had given him gas money, it would have been ten bucks a trip. For me everyday, it's \$1.15 round trip if I buy a monthly pass. You can't beat that.

W.C.E.: I live in the Pomona area. I'm about forty-two miles from here. I take the Pomona station Metro Link all the way to Union Station. From Union Station I hop on the Red Line and take that all the way up. I just bring a large duffle bag of all my drum stuff, as much as I can shove in there, and cart it all the way up here (to Hollywood). I take the bus once a week out to Claremont where I do a radio show. It's just great. It saves me wear and tear on my car. I'm a much more relaxed person when I'm a pedestrian. I get some exercise. There are a million benefits. A million benefits. Maybe I'm a preaching to the choir, but there are a million benefits.

Eddie: You know what's funny, in the "L.A. versus the suburbs"? They (buses) come more often.

W.C.E.: I get every half hour.

Eddie: My skatepark is seven minutes from my house. I go there Saturday and Sunday morning. My nephew skates, one is four. He's in kindergarten, and he ollies off banks. I had to say that! He's like a prodigy. He has an older brother who is nine. We take the bus and it's a voyage. They put the quarter in. They take a ten-minute ride, they get off, and the skatepark's there.

M.Avrg: You guys were all part of Revolution Mother at one point?

W.C.E.: We're the original rhythm section of Revolution Mother, actually. Jason Hampton had called me after It's Casual had opened up for Mike V. And The Rats, which was the older incarnation of Revolution Mother. He wanted to jam with me. He and I had jammed a couple times here and there, and he said, "We want to start a whole new band, and we want to start it with you guys." So Eddie and I came on board, and that was November '05. By February '06, we had recorded the EP. The first Revolution Mother recording at all. That summer we had gone on a pretty extensive Midwest/East Coast tour. We did two legs of that tour. It was pretty awesome. We were playing in malls, in the parking lots. The Zumiez Couch Tour. There were four to five thousand kids, which was a pretty impressive audience. It was cool, and we had the greatest time in that band. They treated us well, and everything worked out great. At the very end, Eddie and I have very busy lives—professional lives that is—and it really became a question of, "Can we do the band, or can we do our professional lives?" Eddie and I, our professional lives, were a little bit more of a priority at that point in

time. That was an amicable split. Those guys are still doing well. I've come back and seen them several times. The new rhythm section is fantastic too. It's all worked out really well. Eddie and I kept going with It's Casual. It was a one-year thing that we did there, and it was great.

M.Avrg: How far outside of L.A. have you (as It's Casual) played?

Eddie: Up to Seattle and back. In June of '07, we flew out to Seattle for the weekend and came back. Then in July ('08), when that earthquake happened in mid-July, we were in Seattle. We did twelve shows in twelve days. We started in San Diego, went all the way up and came back, knocked it out. We played in Visalia, with Black Cobra, and came back that night.

M.Avrg: Favorite place to skate in L.A.?

Eddie: I would say the Belvedere skatepark.

M.Avrg: Do you skate vert or street?

Eddie: I skate vert, street, and bowls. My favorite is a mini-ramp, like four or five feet, twenty-four feet wide.

M.Avrg: What's the story behind songs like "Take Care of Your Kids" and "Navigator"?

W.C.E.: "Navigator": people living beyond their means. People really pouring all their money into their car and nothing else, really. Neglecting their children, neglecting their family, their parents, neglecting their spouses, neglecting their actual needs of what goes on. Instead, investing all their time, money, and efforts into a \$55,000 Lincoln SUV. Putting DVD screens on every headrest, making sure that it's polished and waxed every single weekend. Driving thirty miles an hour down the boulevard with their stereo up full blast and all their windows rolled down. Really, that's just their existence. If that's your existence, that's not a very good one. It really isn't. That's not a goal. Especially if those are the same folks who are living in less than ideal circumstances. I'm not saying all of them do, of course. There are people who can obviously afford it, but I'm talking about those who can't afford living beyond their means. It's something I've seen over and over again. People putting too much emphasis into their vehicle, and not enough into their daily lives. They have children at home. They have spouses. They have elderly parents. That money could be better diverted to things like that. Yet, for them, it's important to be seen in a certain way.

M.Avrg: I had a neighbor who had the DVD hooked up in his car and he loved to play it loud. You would hear the movie at full blast.

W.C.E.: People just seek attention. They need attention. Either they didn't get attention when they were children, or they weren't very well attended to, and so this is their chance to really put their mark on the world. So if that means they have to drive down the boulevard slowly, with their windows rolled down, in a very fancy vehicle with the stereo blasting, then so be it. That's what they're trying to do.

M.Avrg: At that point, it's like the car is the destination, instead of a means...

W.C.E.: Exactly. It's just an interesting idea, or concept, to put my life savings into a

**IF YOU HAVE ONE KID
AND YOU CAN NOT TAKE
CARE OF ONE CHILD
YOU HAVE TOO
MANY KIDS.**

MATT AVERAGE

LOAD

AQ

G

SWIPES

SK1

BEST
442

POLE
GORDO
DISCOUNT CENTER
POLLO GORDO

COMEDY

DON'T DOUBT ME, DUDE!



MATT AVERAGE



vehicle that is just going to depreciate. It's going to be seen as nothing in five years anyway. It's one thing if you have the excess money and you're going to buy a nice car that you're going to restore. A lot of people do that. They have their "Sunday drivers" and whatnot. The idea is just don't live beyond your means and make sure you know where your priorities are. That's the basic tenet of that song.

M.Avg: What about "Take Care of Your Kids"?

Eddie: "Take Care of Your Kids": it's what I see from my house to my job. I love kids. I go out of my way to spend time with my nephew. I get on the bus and people let their kids run around on the bus. They'll have like seven kids. The bus will take off, and they'll (the kids) go flying down the fucking aisle way. Dude, no matter how many kids you have, if you get on the bus, or the subway, at least hold their hand, and make sure they're all sitting down. I'll see the kids run on, the mom and dad are all burnt out, putting the money in. The bus takes off and kids go flying.

W.C.E.: It's just child negligence. It's not necessarily that you have too many kids. My parents come from families of many children. Large families. That's not the

issue. The issue is making sure you're taking care of all the kids you have. If you have seven kids, take care of them. If you have two kids, take care of them. There are people who cannot take care of one child. You have too many kids! If you have one child, and you can not take care of one child, you have too many kids. It isn't necessarily a number. It isn't seven, or nineteen, or four, or two.

Eddie: It's within your means. I would like to have plenty of kids, but I'm not ready financially. My thing is that I want to be very established before I do have kids.

W.C.E.: Myself too.

Eddie: Like going to the market and spending \$200, \$300, or \$400 on groceries cannot be an issue, or shouldn't be an issue at all. I'm not saying it's an issue now, but that's one of the things. You gotta feed your children. So the lyrics are "Take care of your kids/ Where are your kids/ Feed your kids/ You've got kids"! It's reality, dude. It's funny. I've seen people who I know from high school that I'll run into on the bus, and I've seen people with their kids, and I'm like, "This person shouldn't be having kids!" [laughter] I know what they're about, and I'm like, "Oh these poor children!" [laughter]

W.C.E.: Some people just need to plan their lives better. It's a matter of personal responsibility. Again, a lot of these songs really do talk about personal responsibility. Taking care of yourself and making sure you are fit for whatever society brings you.

Eddie: Okay, I come from the city of Whittier, and there are a lot of close-minded people there, where they grow up in the Hispanic household, and the macho father is like, "You know what, you gotta work construction." You're in high school, play football, and have a car when you're sixteen, and you have to have a kid as soon as you leave high school. I walked into the music instrument store in Whittier on a weekend, looking at stuff, and I've seen people with their kids buying a musical instrument. We're talking and I tell them what I do for a living, and they just can't comprehend it because they're so closed in their magnified "working at UPS" world, living with their parents, having their girlfriend and their three kids living in the same room they were in in high school. They're like, "You really toured with CKY?" They doubt you. Just because you have a ceiling over your head, and you're not going to exceed that, don't doubt me, dude! That's the way I lash out. "You got



DONOFTHEDead



kids/ Take care of your kids." It's a lash out, and to get it off my chest as well.

M.Avrg: The song, "LAPD," that's not about the Los Angeles police, is it?

Eddie: No. It's about how the city is overcrowded.

M.Avrg: That's what I thought.

W.C.E.: It's about overpopulation. And really, we don't even have enough police to handle situations at certain times. There have been cutbacks with the LAPD and a lot of essential services. It doesn't necessarily mean LAPD. I think we're talking more city-wide services that cannot handle and meet the demand of the city. That's an infrastructure problem more than it is specifically the LAPD.

Eddie: Prior to where I'm living now—I'm in a pretty decent apartment building, really, really quiet—the prior residence I lived in, I used to see a lot of stuff go down. A couple of big incidences. And it would take the cops twenty minutes to come. Then I did some digging around online, and I find out that Pico Rivera has like five police cars! [laughter] I'm like, "Are you kidding me?" I remember when the incident was going down by my house, this gang fight. The cops showed up, there were two cop cars. They were down the street watching the incident, but no one came

because not everyone was there. I was like, Dude, even the fucking cops are scared. They want to go home and live.

M.Avrg: What would be the perfect version of L.A. for you guys? If you could recreate L.A., how would it be?

Eddie: My utopia of L.A.? First of all, the way it is right now, it's fine. But, a community of trust between everybody. This may sound cheesy and cliché, but no racial lines, and no isolation between races. Better integration. And people, mandatory, don't watch MTV, and watch channel 28, PBS. TV is fucking up a lot of people in the head. They're (TV) telling 'em what they need to be. They need certain things to be a certain status. And they believe it. People will see people on a TV show, and they'll be like, "Well, they have all these nice things." Without thinking it might take hard work. Working seven days a week, get an education before that, and finding a career and springboarding off of that. You don't just deal drugs and live like that. [laughter] To sum it up, my utopia: no racial lines!

Donofthedead: And better public transportation!

W.C.E.: We need more obviously. Because they're not building any new freeways. There are no plans to build any new freeways.

M.Avrg: Even the widening of the freeways isn't helping. By the time they're done, traffic will have increased more. Look how long they've been working on the 405.

Donofthedead: That's all band-aids to the initial plan from the fifties; that fifty percent of the freeways that should have been built now, are not there. They're only widening, but that's just a short-term solution.

W.C.E.: It's really difficult to build that utopia that we want. I think Los Angeles is this ongoing project, and it always will be. There's always going to be cracks and holes in the issues, too. I have to say, for this city, it's done remarkably well, considering all the things that have dragged it down in the past. If you were walking down Hollywood ten, fifteen, twenty years ago, it looked very different than it does today. We now have a brand new shopping center just right over here (Hollywood & Western). This area was horrendous fifteen years ago. Today, I can stand out there and not get harassed. Everything is fine. People are enjoying themselves. There's a subway system on one corner and a brand new Ralph's on the other corner. It helped the community, absolutely!

HORSE

INTERVIEW BY REYAN ALI

RYAN RUSSEL





BITES

LAYOUT BY LAUREN MEASURE

Ever since its inception, punk rock has been an aesthetic indebted to its artistic imagery. In examples like Winston Smith's sharply angular typeface of the Dead Kennedys logo, Raymond Pettibon's imposing Black Flag bars, Jerry Mahoney's boy burning up in suburbia on the front of Bad Religion's *Suffer*, paintings and drawings have created a visual foundation for the material of some of punk's finest records, merchandise designs, and tattoos. However, the overall importance of art in music is rapidly changing with the cultural omnipresence of the MP3, and punk music is feeling the effects. On one hand, the technology of today allows people to illegally download music, which means they do not get a chance to absorb album art because they're primarily after the songs, whereas legal downloaders only receive downsized thumbnail representations of the original album art. At the same time,

there's also been a massive resurgence in the popularity and viability of vinyl, which means that the gatefold format can provide more room for art than a CD ever could. Merchandise sales are on the upswing, too, but apparently at the expense of people buying fewer albums, which could gradually play a role in deciding whether bands want to spend their time and money creating new music or touring to support what's recorded. It's clearly a messy situation.

One such artist trying to navigate this gray area is artist extraordinaire Richard Minino (a.k.a. Horsebites), who is currently crafting some of the freshest and most off-the-wall punk visuals seen in a good while. He's responsible for the stylized petite dancer twirling artfully on the cover of Dead To Me's *Cuban Ballerina*, and the wholesale Armageddon involving alligators, lightning, and tidal waves occurring on the New Mexican Disaster Squad/Western Addiction split. His other artwork includes hideous

eyeballs crawling out of buildings like voyeuristic metaphors come to life, turquoise-hued boars roaring and ripping through chains, centipedes crawling through dismembered hands, skeleton cops cackling at prisoners behind bars, and a tiger sitting in a bizarre clutter of clouds, intestines, and oil. Minino has a style shaped by the creepy surrealism of hardcore punk cover designer Pushead, the gross-out goodness of Garbage Pail Kids artisan John Pound, and the wild freedom of Californian lowbrow artist Camille Rose Garcia. He is able to evoke that sense of seedy and unlikely weirdness that made punk visuals challenging in the first place. Having also served as the drummer of the recently deceased Disaster Squad and also as a part of new Floridian gang Gatorface, his brash and gorgeously gruesome style keeps on sticking with its viewer, no matter on which surface his art appears.

I started getting into punk around tenth grade, and that changed my life. I was like, "Awesome!"

I don't feel weird drawing these creepy images that come naturally to me."

Reyan: What's the first thing you remember drawing or painting?

Richard: I actually still have my first painting, and it's some kind of weird fish-dinosaur in watercolor. I remember painting it but I was only two years old. I definitely had it on my wall until I was twelve. My mom was a painter. My sister went to a national school for art and did paintings and drew a lot, and my dad would sit down and draw every evening. Pretty much everyone in my family was slightly artistic. They were always super supportive and shoved tons of art stuff down my throat, so it was totally easy and accessible to me. My dad was a printer and he owned his own print shop, and I'd go there after school and he had a bunch of rubber stamps and weird ink and an embossing machine that I played with. I would draw and make mixed media things all day.

Reyan: When did you first start developing your current style?

Richard: It was definitely a gradual thing. I remember the first times in elementary school sitting and staring at all my friends' skate decks—Santa Cruz and Powell decks. The art was *incredible* on those. Those artists were insanely influential but I didn't even know it at the time. The whole style I do now didn't actually emerge until the past couple of years. I was kind of all over the place until I finally started finding my niche. Then, it really started coming out and I started honing in on an actual style.

Reyan: Was the time that you saw those skate decks around when you started listening to punk and hardcore?

Richard: I actually didn't get into punk until way later on, whereas most kids got into it at middle school. I used to listen to everything in middle school. I was a huge Pantera fan; I thought they ruled the world. Then, when I was fourteen, my sister's friend got invited to her birthday party. His name is TJ, and he was my neighbor. He brought over a Minor Threat tape and he put it in our home stereo. I remember hearing "I Don't Wanna Hear It," and thinking, "What the hell is this?"

It just blew my mind. It sounded like garbage to me but, at the same time, it was so fast and crazy that I couldn't comprehend what was going on. I just didn't understand it. Everyone at the party hated it. I actually have footage of him standing in a corner playing air drums to Minor Threat. I still didn't get into punk for a year after that, but I always remember that one time. Then, I started getting into Ramones, TSOL, Circle Jerks, stuff like that. He was a huge Southern California punk fan and his favorite band was Adolescents. And D.I. He was a huge D.I. fan. I started getting into punk around tenth grade, and that changed my life. I was like, "Awesome! I don't feel weird drawing these creepy images that come naturally to me."

Reyan: I felt the same way about Minor Threat the first time I listened to them. I thought they were kind of trashy and wondered what the big deal was. The album sounded like it was recorded inside of a tin can, but I guess that's what was great about it—the fact that that was the way they chose to record.

Richard: That's what I love about them. The first time you hear anything and don't know what to think about it, I love that. Like Bad Brains, my friend thought they were a German band. I was like, "Oh really?" Now, I've got a totally different perception of Bad Brains, but I loved that period in my life.

Reyan: I remember reading elsewhere that one of your favorite images is the Bad Brains album art of the Capitol building being struck by lightning [from the cover of their self-titled 1982 record]. Were there any other visuals in that time period that were really provoking?

Richard: Definitely. Like I said, so much of my knowledge is due to my neighbor, and he was really, really into the Southern California punk bands of the '80s, and I always remember the cover of the D.I. album *Team Goon* because it's super simple-looking and reminded me of Vision Street with its black, red, and white. That album cover freaked me out. I loved (D.I.'s) *Ancient Artifacts* album. It was hand-





painted. I loved RKL. I always thought the cover of the Dickies album, *The Incredible Shrinking Dickies*, was cool because they had props and everything. I used to love back in the day that when everything was done by hand, they were going to have a photo shoot, so they had to make themselves small, and had a giant pencil and a huge toothbrush. Everything was totally not proportioned and it was awesome.

Reyan: Jumping much farther ahead to when you were older and had been drawing for a long time in-between playing in and designing for bands, when did you decide that this is what you wanted to do for a living?

Richard: At the time, I was delivering pizza because I was touring, and that was the only job that would let me come back and keep touring. I knew that I couldn't do this for the rest of my life and just be the guy who delivers pizza. My self-esteem was so low. It made me feel like it was the only thing I was capable of, and when I got a design job, it made me feel like this was something I could be doing. I got an opportunity from my friend who works at Fueled By Ramen, and he started giving me some shirt designs to work with. I didn't really have too much confidence in it. I started to do jobs like that, and when I did the CD layout for Strike Anywhere, a ton of work came in for smaller bands who were like "Do this!" and I kept getting bigger and bigger and thought, "This could be really cool." I had the respect of the underground punk scene.

Reyan: Did you get any shit for working with Fall Out Boy from any of your friends in punk bands?

Richard: Sort of. It was more before they got really big. It wasn't like how they were later. To me, doing a shirt design was doing a shirt design. It didn't matter to me about punk cred or any of that kind of stuff. I always hated that whole thing anyways, so if anyone did give me

shit, I wouldn't care because I just kind of live on my own standards. I can't stand when people are, "Oh, you're getting too big!" Actually, I'm gaining my rep and if you want to consider me using their money to pay my rent, just because it's not a punk band doesn't mean I'm selling out. I did a Beyoncé shirt, for crying out loud! I did Lynyrd Skynyrd recently. **Reyan:** To go the other way, who were some of the smaller bands that you did stuff for at this time?

Richard: No Trigger. I remember they were really excited because I did some Strike Anywhere stuff. They were big fans of them. Western Addiction is one of the first few CD layouts I did, too. Some of the workers at Fat were pretty stoked on my stuff—which is how I got to do a lot of the Dead To Me stuff—but it was just random bands, a lot of bands I'd never even heard of that just got a hold of me. It was shocking to me. At first, it was like, "Yeah, sure, why not?" Now, it's almost gotten to the point that I have to turn down certain projects.

Reyan: Where and when did you come up and decide on the "Horsebites" name?

Richard: There's a D.I. album called *Horse Bites, Dog Cries*. That was in my e-mail name. It was really obnoxious and annoying to a lot of people as it was such a long name. Then, I was doing shirts for a guy who was sending a lot of work my way, and he just nicknamed me Horsebites because he kept forgetting my name. "Hey Horsebites, can you do this?" and then I was like, "I like the way that sounds!" It has history in one of my favorite albums. At the same time, I was just getting a lot of work, and was like, "You know what? I might as well start my own company and call it Horsebites." It was weird-sounding and I liked it. It goes back to my punk roots. I'm really, really bad with timelines and stuff like that. I'm going to roughly guess it was three or

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PRESENTS



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I don't like how everyone is trying to please everyone, which is actually really frustrating, so I think that's why some of my images I try to make not for everyone.



four years ago. I never plan for the future and I never think about the past, so I like doing things in the moment.

Reyan: Correct me if I'm wrong, but aren't you the first generation in America of a Chilean family?

Richard: Yeah. My family immigrated here to Queens, New York from Santiago, Chile. Then, they lived there for a while and moved to Orlando in the early '70s. My sister and I were born in the late '70s. I only have one relative who lives in the United States; everyone else is in Chile.

Reyan: Being part of the first American generation in your family, was there any pressure on you to find a job that made very good money?

Richard: Definitely. Because they struggled and busted their asses; I noticed that when I was a kid. My dad was twenty-five when he moved to the United States and they saved \$500 between them both. They didn't know anyone here then and didn't know a lick of English. They just came. It was the most inspiring thing that I've ever seen in anyone I know. I remember that my mom always wanted me to be a dentist, and then, later, she wanted me to be a chiropractor—anything that she knew that would make me a lot of money, and I wouldn't have to struggle like how they had it. I knew from the beginning that music and art were my life, and the cool thing about that is that my parents were cool with it. They never disapproved. It's got to be kind of weird at first, seeing me draw eyeballs and guts, but since I've had a few art shows, they get the picture.

Reyan: Now, as someone who's been in bands for a while, what do you think of the way things are going in punk and in the music industry? How are the changes in technology going to affect how people take in your work?

Richard: It's completely changed. Lately, punk has turned me off so much that I keep going back to my old-school records. There's a sense of danger and not caring in how big the band was going to get or how many records they were going to have to sell. I don't like how everyone is trying to please everyone, which is actually really frustrating, so I

think that's why some of my images I try to make not for everyone. I try not to make it too broad, and make it violent or gory because this is what punk is, and if your mom doesn't like it, then it's good.

In the whole thing with MP3s and file sharing, I actually don't mind that. It's going to happen. Every time a new format comes out, it totally changes how everything works in the music industry, and this is the next thing. Honestly, I don't even know what I'd do without my iPod. If I was in a band full-time, it would affect me. To be honest, if people burnt a CD of my band, I would be as stoked because it'd mean that they liked it. I've noticed that merch has actually gone through the roof because CD sales are so slow. I do try hard on CD layouts to make something interesting, but I feel like my effort is wasted because the kids are going to ignore it anyways. The good thing is that vinyl is on the rise, and that's even cooler because now my art's going to be much bigger. As a kid, to see a big 12" record, you could see all the art, all the close-ups in Pushead line drawings.

Reyan: What don't you like to see in punk imagery? Are there any cliché motifs that you don't want to see again?

Richard: Yeah, actually, for a while, if you look at my old stuff, it might be one or two things with skulls in it. I thought about not doing that, but then when I started getting back into them, I figured if they're more tastefully done, it's alright. It honestly depends on how things are drawn. Other things that were overdone—I hated that whole era of Photoshop shirts where everything was standard Impact font for the band and some splatter and a clip art of a bomber plane. I'm glad that that's over. But now it seems like people are drowning everything in that whole '80s look.

Reyan: What do you want to see more of?

Richard: I'd like to see more hand-done stuff. That'd be really cool. Not just drawings, but like what Heather Gabel does, strictly collage stuff. It's got a certain look to it, like old Buzzcocks and Sex Pistols records and shirts.

Reyan: What kind of impression has Florida had on your work?



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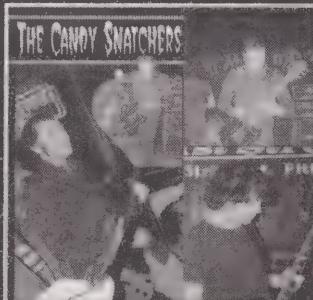
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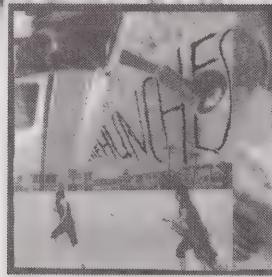


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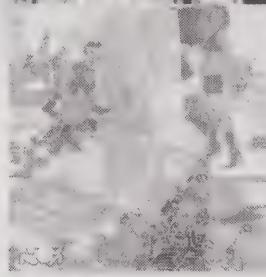
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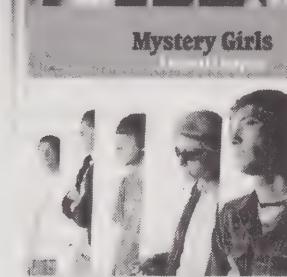
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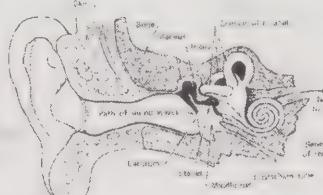
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(LP w/ free CD)

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Richard: I guess just the whole beach/fake paradise thing. Florida is almost like a crappy mock of California. The architecture that they just keep tearing down is really frustrating. It's got no character. That's why I love going to places like Philly or San Francisco or Richmond. They keep trying to restore things. Florida, being the concrete jungle that it is, constantly tears down and builds new; putting parking lots on top of everything.

Reyan: You've always cited the presence of Disney in Florida as being one of the things that impacted your art.

Richard: Yeah, I was obsessed with Disney. I would watch old Disney things as a kid all the time. The fact that they took so much time to do those background images, I was floored, even as a kid. The fact that they put so many hours into that blew my mind. *Alice in Wonderland* was so weird and trippy even as a kid. I liked that, even for Disney, things weren't so safe. As an awesome animator and innovator, it was cool to know that Walt Disney lived around the corner.

Reyan: Does it make you sad to know that Disney is no longer producing hand-animated movies?

Richard: Yeah. I like all the Pixar stuff, but it's a cop out. It doesn't feel as magical or hard-earned. It's kind of a bummer but you can only expect it to go that way.

Reyan: Animals appear in your stuff a lot. Where does that come from?

Richard: I have no idea. I guess I love drawing animals. It might be my fear of drawing people. That's why I draw hands a lot; it's very hard for me to do, so I feel like I should do it as much as I can to be comfortable with it. Maybe subconsciously animals have special meaning. I like drawing so many different variations of them because that's probably the only thing that can make sense to me.

Reyan: Where does your use of colors come from? Do you start out a work with the colors in mind, or do you get half done and then say, "This is what I want to put into it"?

Richard: Sometimes I'll think about the colors beforehand, but usually, I draw everything by hand, so it's always black and white, and once I put it in the computer, I start choosing the colors. You'll notice almost everything I've done has an opaqueness to it. There's always white mixing in with the colors, never solid primary colors or anything. I just like designs that look kind of crazy, but kind of soft on the eyes. I just like that weird fine balance. It's picking them, and just slowly altering them until I find something that looks good on my eyes and doesn't make me want to gouge them out.

Reyan: How many projects do you take on at a time and how much time in a day would you say you spend working on art?

Richard: I've spent up to sixteen hours working. It all depends on how soon a project needs to be turned in. The thing about being my own boss is I usually work every day, so I get to spread my work out



more and I don't feel like I need to work for eight hours. Today, I did a logo for Harvest of Hope Foundation, I did part of another logo, and then I went and watched *Wayne's World*. [Laughs] I specifically put *Wayne's World* on. I was like, "I'm going to watch *Wayne's World*. This rules, I can do whatever the fuck I want."

Reyan: Do you personally feel more comfortable seeing your work up in a gallery or seeing it on a T-shirt or record sleeve? Where do you think your art is best viewed?

Richard: It's really gratifying to see it in a gallery, but, at the same time, it makes me really nervous. I think the best thing ever is seeing a random kid walking in the mall or at a punk show or anywhere wearing one of my designs. The more random the place the better. I just love that feeling—the person not knowing that I'm the guy behind the curtain.

Reyan: Let me jump back to music for a second: You were part of New Mexican Disaster Squad and I've heard you broke up. What happened there? Why'd you guys break up and is there any chance of you guys getting back together?

Richard: The reason we broke up was because our old guitar player said if he played any more punk stuff he'd kill himself. No, I'm just kidding! [Laughs] Our guitar player was like, "Dude, I'm just so beyond broke I can't go on tour anymore." We used to have a lot of debt. We still have a lot. Our van just got repossessed three months ago, so it was a big, mutual thing. I just felt really comfortable about this, and thought, "Let's just close the book on this band. We've done it for eight years or nine years." It's sad for us because it's such a big part of our lives, but it's so much cooler to know that we can all leave and just go hang out at the bar like best friends.

I specifically put
Wayne's World
on. I was like, "I'm
going to watch
Wayne's World.
This rules, I can
do whatever the
fuck I want."

www.horsebitesdesign.com

TOP FIVES

RAZORCAKE STAFF

Adrian

- My Wrestling Entrance Theme – Dicks, “Saturday Night at the Bookstore”
- Music for My Carefully Choreographed High Speed Car Chase – Herb Alpert, “A Taste of Honey”
- Aural Equivalent of My Mental State While Driving to Work in the Morning – Killing Joke, “Invocation”
- My Personal Ideal Cheesy Boy Meets Girl Song – Plugz, “Electrify Me”
- Soundtrack for a Breakdown – Cows, “Midnight Cowboy”

Albert Lam

Top 5 Typefaces That Are Not Helvetica

- Futura
- Avant Garde
- ITC Anna
- Bauhaus
- Univers

Amy Adoyzie

Because This is a Music Fanzine After All

- “Shove It,” Santogold
- “Mornings,” Japantaner
- “Thrash Unreal,” Against Me!
- “Waiting for Something,” Jay Reatard
- “Lapdog,” Bent Outta Shape

Art Ettinger

- Shorebirds, *It's Gonna Get Ugly* LP
- Pist, The, *Input Equals Output* 2 x LP
- MDC/Potbelly, *Zombie Love Split* 7"
- Chris Clavin, *The Roads Lead Everywhere* LP
- Squirtgun, *Broadcast 02.09.08* LP

Ben Snakepit

1. Dillinger Four, *Civil War* LP (records with download cards are awesome)
2. Lover!/LiveFastDie, split 7" (“Booger in my Asshole” is the best song EVER!)

3. Serious Tracers, live (best band in Austin)
4. The Young, Self-titled 7" (Super Secret Records)
5. Dead Moon, *Hard Wired in Ljubljana* 2 x LP (I think it's a reissue, but I just got it)

Buttertooth

1. Dianogah, *Southern Records* (Thirteen years and still going strong!)
2. Banner Pilot, *Resignation Day*
3. Insects Vs. Robots, live show at Soda Bar, San Diego CA. These kids rip it up and practice contortion moves at the same time!
4. Lungfish, old Dischord band, I saw this band in '92, they are greatly under appreciated and are still around!
5. US Maple, the internet!, I've been revisiting the Midwest noise bands of the '90s lately. These guys played my basement once!

Craven Rock

5. *Invisible Man*, by Ralph Ellison (book)
4. *Some Phantom/No Time Flat*, by Stephen Beachy
3. The Gadabout Traveling Film Festival
2. 16th & Mission open mic
1. *The Shape of Things to Come*, by Greil Marcus (book)

Cristy C. Road

- Top Five Bands That Should Get Back Together*
1. VanBuilderass
 2. Mushuganas
 3. The Messengers
 4. Boomfancy
 5. Carnal Knowledge
(I truly apologize if any of the members of the aforementioned bands are dead or severely hate one another for valid reasons.)

Dave Williams

- Top 5 Records of 2008*
(in no particular order):
1. Pinhead Gunpowder, Self-titled 7"
 2. Masshysteri, *Vår Del Av Stan* LP
 3. Off With Their Heads, *From the Bottom* LP
 4. Dillinger Four, *Civil War* LP
 5. H2O, *Nothing to Prove* LP

Chris Pepus

(Honorable mentions: The Measure [SA], *One Chapter in the Book* LP; Hank III, *Damn Right, Rebel Proud* LP)

Designated Dale

5. *Things to Wolf Down in Chitown*
1. Pizza puffs (don't ask, just find)
2. Gino's East Pizza
3. Portillo's double-dipped beef sandwich (yes, *sangwich*) with slathered mozzarella
4. Garrett's popcorn, cheese and caramel mix
5. Vienna Beef hot dogs, commonly known to the rest of the world as Chicago Dogs

Jeff Proctor

1. Seeing old friends at Fest VII
2. Seeing old friends in San Francisco over Thanksgiving
3. Punk rock bowling is right around the corner! Team Punkboard for the win!
4. No Knife reunion in January
5. RIP Willy Graves 1980-2008 (Plot to Blow Up The Eiffel Tower, Dosage & Usage, etc.)

Jennifer Federico

- Top 5 Songs to Be Stuck to If You Have to Be Stuck to Something*
1. Pink Section, “Tour of China”
 2. Erase Errata, “Retreat, The Most Familiar, Extensive, I Bet!”
 3. Fuckwolf, “The Dream”
 4. Les Savy Fav “Hold on to You'r Genre”
 5. Dillinger Four, “Gainesville”

Danny Martin

- Top 5 Documentaries...*
1. *Sherman's March* (1986)
 2. *Unforgivable Blackness* (1985)
 3. *Who Killed The Electric Car?* (2006)
 4. *The Day After Trinity* (1980)
 5. *The Wobblies* (1979)

Daryl Gussin

- Dillinger Four, *Civil War* LP
- Shorebirds, *It's Gonna Get Ugly* LP
- Los Crudos, live in downtown LA
- Wax Museums LP
- Statues, *New People Make Me Nervous* LP (Thanks Matty!)

Dave Disorder

- Favorite Bent Outta Shape Songs. We'll Miss You Jamie.*
- “Stray Dog Town”
 - “Half Ass Heart”
 - “I Don’t Know”
 - “Bleeding Streets”
 - “Bent Outta Shape”

Denise DePaolo

1. Austin Lucas, *Putting the Hammer Down* CD
2. Eric Swanson, *Franklin Avenue* CD
3. Tim Barry, *Rivanna Junction* CD
4. All of the *Twilight* books (piss off, they’re good)
5. *John Adams* by David McCullough (book)

Jeremy J

1. QuicKeys!
2. Rivethead, *Rivethead* (the one Todd lent me)
3. Dillinger Four, *Civil War* (Fat)
4. The Bananas, *New Animals* (Recess)
5. My Charlie Parker Pandora station

Jessica T

1. P. Paul Fenech, *Skitzofenech* CD
2. Izzy Cox, *Love Letters from the Electric Chair* CD
3. Avett Brothers, songs “A Love Song to Jenny” and “Offering”
4. *Art Fein Presents LA Rockabilly*, CD (1983)
5. Cub Koda, *That's What I Like About the South* (1983)

Mullett getting a black eye during walnut ping pong.

Jimmy Alvarado

- Rest in peace, Dolemite, Miriam, and Forry: Heroes all, each in their own way.
- Killing Joke, Live @ House of Blues: The original lineup tore the roof off the place and remain one of the finest punk bands ever.
- Creepy Archives Vol. 1, book: First five issues of this venerated horror comic get reissued in hardbound and nice paper, so's you can clearly see the awesome art.
- Chrome, *The Chrome Box* 3X CD: Some of the greatest, trippiest, and rockin' punk/psych noise ever.
- Bush finally being sent home: Allow me to extend this heartfelt single-finger salute to you and your faction of fellow fuckin' louts as the lot of you leave.

Joe Evans III

- 5. Dillinger Four, *Civil War* CD
- 4. Full Of Fancy/Screaming Females, split 7"
- 3. Tris McCall, *The Open Secret* CD
- 2. The Measure [SA], *Songs About People... 12"*
- 1. The Ergs! and Hunchback. Period.

Josh Benke

- 1. Thee Oh Sees, *Peanut Butter Oven* 12"EP
- 2. Hunx and His Punks, both 7"
- 3. Rock'N'Roll Adventure Kids, *Hillbilly Psychosis* LP
- 4. Fast Cars, *Coming...Ready or Not!* LP
- 5. Sonic Chicken 4, *Midnight Girl* 7"

Juan Espinosa

- Top 5 Records That I Could Not Get Enough of in 2008*
- 1. Eddy Current Suppression Ring, *Primary Colours* LP
 - 2. Dillinger Four, *Civil War* LP
 - 3. Darvocets, *Are New Wave* LP
 - 4. Underground Railroad To Candyland, songs on Smallpool Records 4 Way Split LP
 - 5. Tie: Marvelous Darlings, *I Don't Want to Go to the Party* EP (Deranged) and Sinks, *Beat Out My Brains* EP

Keith Rosson

- The Taxpayers, live
- Bright Shiny Morning by James Frey (novel)
- Mullett getting a black eye during walnut ping pong
- Hard Girls, demo CD-R (Pteradon/Shinobu guys)
- The yet-to-be released Pteradon full-length

Kiyoshi Nakazawa

- Top 5 zines Trades I Got at Alternative Press Expo 11/08*
- 1. A Comic Bomb by Luster Kaboom

- 2. *Beauty Across America* by Martha Rich & Esther Pearl Watson
- 3. *Hero Land #2* by Esther Pearl Watson
- 4. *Night of The Living Vidiots* by Andy Ristaino
- 5. *Jin & Jam no. 1* by Hellen Jo

Kurt Morris

- 1. N.W.A., *Straight Outta Compton*
- 2. Reading books for grad school. So many books...
- 3. Writing lots of papers
- 4. Dillinger Four, *Civil War*
- 5. Hitting the gym

Lauren Trout

- Favorite CDs I Got at Fest*
- Off With Their Heads, *Hospitals*
 - Lemuria, *Get Better*
 - Pink Razors, *Waiting to Wash Up*
 - Ergs, *Jersey's Best Prancers*
 - Shinobu, *Worstward, Ho!*

The Lord Kveldulfir

- Five Artists and Songs That I Would Pay Top Dollar to Hear Covered by either Tom Waits or Brian Setzer:*
- Misfits, "Hollywood Babylon"
 - The Jesters, "Cadillac Man"
 - Squirrel Nut Zippers, "The Ghost of Stephen Foster"
 - Skulls, "Jesus Put a Bullet Through My Soul"
 - Nostril?, "The Three B's of Polka"

Maddy Tight Pants

- 1. Marked Men, *Fortune* 7"
- 2. France Gall, *Poupée de Son* CD
- 3. Teenage Bottlerocket, *Warning Device* LP
- 4. Paul Baribeau, *Grand Ledge* 10"
- 5. Bananas, *New Animals* CD

Matt Average

- 1. Nitid, *Ibländ Kan Inte Hindra Sig Själv* CD
- 2. The Impulse Int'l, everything
- 3. -16-, live at the Relax Bar
- 4. Capitalist Casualties / Hellnation, split CD
- 5. Tristess, *Hög & Låg Blues* LP

Megan Pants:

- In Memory of Jamie Ewing, My Top 5 Favorite Lyrics from Stray Dog Town, Which I Still Can't Listen to*
- 1. "There's a certain way I feel, but I cannot never say to you, I could never say to you, but... it... goes... like this..."
 - 2. "Everybody I know found themselves in the same mess. Just a-lookin' out the window wonderin' where everybody went."
 - 3. "If that was the last time I tasted innocence and winced, this must be the backwash."
 - 4. "We're the patron saints of doin' absolutely nothin' 'cept runnin' our bodies in the ground"
 - 5. "Your mind's made up. I'm a time waster, rotten hearted asshole

bastard promise breaker, but I'll always remember you dancin' around the kitchen to Spanish music blasting thru the walls and red wine stained teeth."

Mike Faloon

- 1. Boss Tweed, *Five Little Lies* CD EP (self-released)
- 2. The Ergs, *That's It...Bye 12"* EP
- 3. The Impulse Int'l, "The Real Kid" b/w "The World Hates Me" 7"
- 4. The Safes, *Sight of All Light* CD EP (O'Brothers)
- 5. So Cow, *Commuting* 7" EP (Going Underground)

Mike Frame

- 1. Funeral Shock, *Paint Thinner* 7"EP
- 2. Off With Their Heads, *From the Bottom* CD
- 3. Lucinda Williams, *Little Honey* CD
- 4. Figures Of Light, *Smash Hits* LP
- 5. The Weight, *Are Men* LP

MP Johnson

- Fun Fun Fun Fest in Austin, TX
- GNR, *Chinese Democracy* CD
- Dillinger Four, *Civil War* CD
- *Gingerdead Man* 2 DVD
- Christina Aguilera, *Keeps Getting Better* CD

Naked Rob (KSCU 103.3FM)

- 1. Total Abuse, *Total Abuse* CD
- 2. Young Widows, *Old Wounds* CD
- 3. Akimbo, *Jersey Shores* CD
- 4. Git Some, *Git Some* CD
- 5. The Lords Of Altamont, *The Altamont Sin* CD

Nick Toerner

- The Ergs!, *That's It, Bye 12"*
- Delay/Monikers split 7"
- Pink Razors, *Leave Alive* 12"
- Cheeky, Art of the Underground #29 7"
- Be My Doppleganger, *Sonic Annihilation* 7"

Rene Navarro

- 1. Belle & Sebastian, *The BBC Sessions*, double vinyl
- 2. Tom Gabel, *Heart Burns* CD
- 3. Pg. 99 / City Of Caterpillar, 7"
- 4. Jets To Brazil, *Perfecting Loneliness* CD
- 5. Le Shok, *We Are Electrocution* 12"

Rev. Norb

- 1. Perfect Fits, *Radio Transmitter* 7"
- 2. Nerves, *One Way Ticket* LP
- 3. Speedies, *Speedy Delivery* LP
- 4. Midwest Beat, 2 x 7"
- 5. Elephant Walk, *Swim the Sea* 7"

Rhythm Chicken

- Six Finger Satellite, *Machine Cuisine* 10"
- Dillinger Four, *Civil War*
- Double Down Saloon (Las Vegas)

- Neil Young, *After the Gold Rush*
- Can of Schlitz, shot of "ass juice", and a Slim Jim... \$5.

Ryan Leach

1. The new Black Time record
2. The new Hunches record
3. The new Mystery Girls record
4. Larry Hardy for putting out all of the above
5. Amy Adoyzie (Why? Just cuz...)

Ryan Horky

1. Napalm Death, *Time Waits for No Slave* (God bless internet leaks!)
2. Cheap Girls, *Find Me a Drink Home* LP
3. Die Kreuzen, Self-titled LP
4. Today Is The Day, live at Mac's Bar, Lansing, MI 11/14/08
5. The Measure [SA], *One Chapter In The Book* LP

Sean Koepenick

- Top 5 Down By Law Songs*
1. "Question Marks & Periods"
 2. "Gruesome Gary"
 3. "Bright Green Globe"
 4. "The Last Brigade"
 5. "Next to Go"

Steve

1. Eddy Current Suppression Ring, *Primary Colours*
2. The Boys, *Boys Only*
3. The Ethiopians, *Original Reggae Hitsound* LP
4. Sneaky Punks, "Loner w/a Boner" 7"
5. Loner with a Boner... ha!

Todd Taylor

- Shorebirds, *It's Gonna Get Ugly* LP
- Dead Mechanical, *Medium Noise* LP
- Marked Men, "Fortune" b/w "Like Robots" 7"
- Dillinger Four, *Civil War* LP
- Measure [SA], *Songs about People... and Fruit n'Shit* 12"EP
- Shang-a-Lang CD that we made for the Razorcake HQ from all of their 7" tracks so we could listen to 'em tip to tail without having to bribe an intern to play them all vinyl-ly.

Ty Stranglehold

Top Five "F" Bands:

1. Faction
2. Forbidden Dimension
3. Forgotten Rebels
4. Fluf
5. FYP

Vincent Battilana

- Shorebirds, *It's Gonna Get Ugly* LP
- Gordon Gano's Army, Self-titled LP
- Vivian Girls, Self-titled LP
- Dillinger Four, *Civil War* LP
- Dead Mechanical, *Medium Noise* LP

ACTS OF SEDITION / SADVILLE:

Split: 7" EP

Wow, Acts Of Sedition rip! They're definitely influenced by bands like Tragedy, but are certainly no clone band. While Acts Of Sedition are heavy and can hit hard with a good riff, they're also wise enough to write songs that are tuneful and dynamic in movement. Perhaps it's the Bay Area influence as well? Either way, two really good songs on here. On the other side, we have Sadville... Erm.... A bit of a joykill after Acts Of Sedition. They dip their toe in black metal musically, but lack the sinister darkness and ferocity. In the end, it's an overindulgent mess. -M.Avg (Inkblot)

AUTISTIC YOUTH / COLA FREAKS:

Split 7"

Autistic Youth: Brings up a philosophical question I often think about when dealing with music. If a band (The Observers) who were amazing, broke up too soon (in my estimation), how do I feel about a band (Autistic Youth) who basically picked up the torch and ran down another alley with it? It gets into an involved algorithm: 1.) How much time has passed? 2.) Is it a straight-up rip or did they come to similar conclusions independently? 3.) Does it rock in and of itself beyond any itches it may scratch by being so familiar? I'll say this—Autistic Youth are on to something extremely powerful and well worth listening to and they just happen to sound like the best of The Observers (see issue #47 for what they actually sound like). **Cola Freaks:** Their previous 7" sounded like Vicious-lite mixed with Knugen Faller-lite, but something big clicked into place, and they take some of the sting out of all those great Swedish punk revival bands in the Ny Vag tradition that've broken up left, right, and center. This music heart's still pumpin' new blood no matter how many times it's volleyed into another set of bodies. Great stuff all around. -Todd (Blackwater/Taken By Surprise/Sabotage)

BAD SPORTS: Self-titled: 7"

The A-side, "All the Time," is a monstrous, reverbed arty-fact that could have easily come from an unknown '60s British band, which surprised me after learning the pedigree of the members of the Bad Sports and hearing the opening guitar hook. I thought it was going to be a breezy, boozy, catchy tune in the vein of the Romance Novels, but what I got was buckets of big guitar, boooming bass, and tub-thumping drums. Not what I expected from members of the

RECORD REVIEWS



"Records are kind of like piñatas, if there is just one really cool thing in there, then it was worth busting open."

-Corinne

Dillinger Four, *Civil War*

Wax Museums and The B-side tunes "Hey OK" and "Asshole with the Girl" sound like a '90s basement show if Live Fast Die warped back to SF and split a bill with the Rip Offs. The songs are exceptionally great and over way too fast. Love this record. -Josh Benke (Boom Chick)

BEACH PATROL: *Riding Dinosaurs*: CD

Beach Patrol is four dudes (three when this was recorded) from Green Bay who play big, fun, catchy power pop/pop punk tunes. *Riding Dinosaurs* captures all of the fun on this here aluminum disc, released on their own record label, Duck On Monkey Records. Taking obvious cues from Elvis Costello and Big Star, Beach Patrol sounds a lot to me like if the Billy Joel from "You May Be Right" and "It's Still Rock and Roll to Me" fronted the Influents on their *Check Please* record, and I mean that in the best, most positive way possible. This is good, real good. Clean, but crunchy guitars. An echo-y moog flirts in and out of the songs and adds some pep. Drums rain down with crashing cymbals, marching along to keep your head bopping and toes tapping in perfect time, the way all great pop drummers should play (see Tommy Ramone, Keith Moon, Grant Hart, and Patrick Wilson for reference). Plus, the

artwork with the band members riding their respective dinosaurs is pretty sweet, too. Nice work all around. -Jeff Proctor (Duck On Monkey)

BORED STRAIGHT: Self-titled: 7" EP

If throwback early '80s hardcore was an illness (and I'm sure some would argue it is), then this Wisconsin quartet would be terminal. What makes Bored Straight stand out from any number of bands playing this brand of punk? It doesn't look like much. But! It might be the fact they totally know it and flaunt it with pride ala allusions to early '80s hardcore bands such as Die Kruezen and Minor Threat. Either way, it rips. -Daryl (Data Control)

BRAINERD: *Animal Mother*: CD

My snotty review of this Madison band's last disc prompted such a shitstorm of local message board flamejobbery that I'm tempted to do it again, just for the sheer sport of it all. However, the band has now cut their otherwise uninteresting White-Grungers-On-Gein faux Sub-Pop shenanigans with a few neat tricks, like briefly sounding like a fucked up Joy Division ((the first fifty seconds of "Jesus")), or even coming across as tangentially glammy ("Tabula Rasa")), thus I cannot dismiss this record outright just for the time-honored purpose of "starting

shit," although I did consider it. Other than that, I dunno, I think this sounds like what grunge used to sound like. Wisconsin's progressive reputation continues unabated! **BEST SONG:** "Tabula Rasa" **BEST SONG TITLE:** "Ed Gein," of course! **FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT:** Looks a lot like the Dwarves "Blood, Guts & Pussy" album, but redder, and without the midget. -Rev. Nørø (Zodiac Killer)

BRAINWORMS / TUBERS: Split: 7"

Brainworms: Pretty Revolution Summer-esque stuff. They provide one original and a live cover of "For Want of" by Rights Of Spring, which is my favorite ROS song. Their original ain't bad, but it's hard for me to recall what it sounds like after listening to the cover. It's emotional hardcore like you want it to be when you hear that term; that much I can remember. But their cover is where it's at. I mean, c'mon, it's a ROS song! **Tubers:** Kind of a lightweight Hot Snakes. They aren't as frantic, but it doesn't seem like that's what they're going for. It's kind of like Hot Snakes with a dash of Fugazi—maybe my mind was stuck on Guy Picciotto from the other side. Tubers also contribute a cover on their side. It's of "Glad I Don't Know" by the Lemonheads. It definitely doesn't sound like the other songs on their side, but it beats the original version while not straying very far from it. Then again, I never was too big on the Lemonheads (I always confuse them with the Gin Blossoms). -Vincent (Bakery Outlet / Dead Tank / Rorschach)

BREAD AND BOTTLE:

Long Story Short: CD

I feel like a hack referring to Bread And Bottle as "Chicago punk rock." Maybe it's because I've only been living here a year, so I really don't know what that originally meant, and since there such a variety of sounds currently coming out from bands like The Arrivals, Sass Dragons, Tongues, and A/V Murder, that it makes it hard to find anything unifying. But, this has that meat and potatoes feel that I get from Pegboy and Raygun and always associate with Chicago, just with a bit more melody thrown in. It's catchy as fuck and the dogs I walk are probably sick of me singing the parts of "Roosevelt" I get stuck in my head on a daily basis (though not as sick as I was hearing the Repellents covering it once...yeesh!). They've got two of the Brothers Scaccia, who throw loft shows in a city where house shows don't really exist and put out awesome stuff on Lucky Gator Records (they co-released this with Johann's Face,

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run by Marc Ruvalo, whose band Das Kapital shares Ryan Scaccia on bass with Bread And Bottle. Yeah, it sort of feels like San Pedro, and that's always a good feeling). If you like catchy and fun and dancing and guitar players who spin on one foot and drummer-singers and pretty amazing bass playing, then you should probably buy this and invite me over for a dance party. Well, except I already have it and I'm not too keen on strangers. -Megan (Johann's Face/Lucky Gator, co-release)

CAPITALIST CASUALTIES / HELLNATION: Split: CD

Both bands have been around for about one hundred years each, so you'd think their golden years have long passed. I don't know what happened, but that usually correct logic has been turned upside down. This is the best stuff yet from both bands. Seriously. The nine songs from Capitalist Casualties are fuggin' mindblowing. I sit here in awe staring at my stereo. When you think it can't get any better, the next song starts up, and it's even more awe-inspiring than the last. They thrash like mad, but the time changes and mid-tempo parts only add more power to what is there. "Corporate Retreat" is the best example, and it's also a catchy song. Hellnation come on with a vengeance. Full-on thrash with some time changes to break up the onslaught of fast, fast, and faster. "Bought & Sold" starts off sounding like a late '80s skaterock tune, then

"screeeeeeee!!!!!!", they blast you with a full tilt. Undoubtedly a release that will be regarded as a classic. -M.Avrg (Six Weeks / Sound Pollution)

CHIP HANNA & THE BERLIN THREE: Self-titled: CD

An exciting, rousing Southern rock/cowpunk album from US Bombs' drummer Chip Hanna and members of legendary German psychobilly band Mad Sin. The most promising group my tired ears have heard in a long time. Well-balanced blend of traditional American music with enough speed and charisma to keep toes tapping, heads nodding, and listeners singing along. The product of two simple ingredients: decades of combined experience and true passion for American music. That's all it takes. Really. -Jessica T (Acetate)

CIVILIZATION: Self-titled: CDR

What is it about Florida—or the South in general—that creates such dirge? There seems to be a dirty, swampy edge bands get from down that way. This two-piece guitar and drum combo, out of Jacksonville, Florida lays down some down-tuned aggression. Reminds me of the band Black Cobra with their Sabbath-ish, stoney riffs but with the punk energy of Holy Mountain. Brooding, yet with a solid punch of energy at times to keep it interesting. The recording has a live feel to it. Would like to hear what comes out when they go all-out in the studio. Cool use of a used

Blockbuster Video DVD case. They recycle! -Donofthedead (Dead Tank)

DEAD MECHANICAL: Medium Noise: LP

I know nothing of the band itself, so the following is completely hypothetical. Contains members who have been in previous bands of varying regional notoriety. The band's a democracy of sorts and the team leaders are older, have settled into the idea that music is a great weapon against complacency, a torch to illuminate the next couple of steps, and a heart warmer, not a career opportunity. They're aware of Dillinger Four, Jawbreaker, and Toys That Kill, but don't want to sound anything like them. They want to sound like who shows up in the mirror in the morning. The person who writes the lyrics reads books. Many books and probably has several zines under their belt. The following is not hypothetical: *Medium Noise* is a varied, exciting, well written, well recorded album that's the sum of lives closely examined. It's mid-paced, melodic, and melancholic while giving the overall feeling of Baltimore in the winter: the rust, the caked-on ice, white puffs of breath, of a town living in the shadow of much larger cities and deciding to stay and celebrate what it has to offer, which took the better part of a decade to realize. A spot-on album. Highly recommended. -Todd (Toxic Pop)

DEAD TO ME: Little Brother: CDEP

If Dead To Me had put out something merely as good as *Cuban Ballerina*,

that would have been impressive, as that was one of my favorite albums of the last couple years. What they did, though, was build on their strengths to get even better with this EP and cross the threshold from great to exciting. Case in point, the dual lead vocals between Jack Dalrymple and Chicken are a thing of beauty. The only other bands I can think of where two distinct voices compliment each other this well are X and Fugazi. The icing on the cake is that the band takes a page from the book of Jeff Pezzati and sprinkles all the songs with unbelievably gorgeous vocal harmonies, such as the middle section of "Ran That Scam." The band has also tweaked their sound and strengthened production values just a bit so as to introduce a bit more variety in their songs than was previously present. For instance, there are dub parts in "Little Brother," a vaguely dancey hi-hat in "Arrhythmic Palpitations," and distinct tones that really make the presence of multiple guitars apparent throughout the EP. Dead To Me is pulling off the feat of getting to be a stronger, more polished band, but without losing their edge or drive. When bands, such as The Clash or F.Y.P., manage to mature and develop in such a short space of time and do it right, it truly is an amazing thing. Dead To Me are quickly proving themselves to be in that league. The only bad thing I can say is that at five songs, this is over far too quick. When's the next full length?! -Adrian (Fat)

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DEADLY SINS: *Selling Our Weaknesses*: CD

My esteem for this record cannot properly be conveyed through mere linguistic wanderings, so I shall attempt to convey my praise through interpretive dance. [...] Another attempt at words: it sounds to me like what Ann Beretta would sound like with a female vocalist. My trigger has been tripped. Thank you, Deadly Sins! Bwak bwak! —The Lord Kveldulfur (Dury Mick)

DESTRUCTORS 666:

Malleus Maleficarum: CDEP

Apparently, this band has been around since the mid-1970s and gone through a lot of line-up changes. It looks like they have only added the scary numbers to their moniker within the last few years. This is the second in a series of "theme" records. I guess it's kind of like listening to a Xmas record, except you are worshipping Satan for kicks. The title refers to a witch hunting manual that was published in the 1600s. Although the music is engaging punk, the subject matter gets a little tiresome after about song number three. I guess 'cause I'm not a practicing warlock. —Sean Koepenick (Rowdy Farris)

DIFUNTOS, LOS:

Born and Raised in East L.A.: CD

The Good: These kids are well versed in their spaghetti western soundtracks, as evidenced by the bendy guitar nods toward Morricone's work sprinkled

throughout. I even noticed a reference to Beethoven's "Moonlight Sonata" as well. Very, very nice work, there, and as per usual, Michael Rozon's production is also top tier. The Bad: Squandering all the above on Rancid-inspired psychobilly (yup, you read that right) seems a bit of a waste. I'm really not trying to slag this off, 'cause as it stands, this is notable work for the genre in which they've decided to plant their feet and it serves as a nice reminder of how diverse East L.A.'s punk scene can be, but it just seems to me there are innumerable ways this could've been a much more amazing piece of work from a band who hails from the same neighborhoods that spawned Thee Undertakers, The Thrusters, Yeska, Misled, and tons of other punk-oriented bands who followed their own muse. I'll be the first to admit my appreciation for psychobilly as a viable musical avenue waned more than two decades ago and I've never thought Rancid was very interesting, and again, what they do they do quite well, so I guess it just comes down to a clash of personal tastes. The Not-So-Ugly: They keep the stereotypical trappings of life in East Los confined to one song, and even there they don't wallow in lurid gangster posturing, which is probably the part of this experience I liked most. —Jimmy Alvarado (Nickel and Dime)

DILLINGER FOUR: *Civil War*: CD

"Accidents or accusations I got my fucking reasons/And even hearts of gold can overload/When they've lost

what they believed in/When the seams start to come apart/In this frustration we find our salvation." Somewhere, some kid is going to listen to those words and get that feeling. You know the feeling, right? Maybe it's been a while since you've felt it, but you know it. It's the reason you listen to music. It's that connection, that unexplainable energy that somehow gets inside you, that feeling of warmth when you realize that—no matter how much shit the world is pouring down on you—everything is really fucking all right. Does anything else matter more than that? —MP Johnson (Fat)

DILLINGER FOUR: *Civil War*: CD

Actually I didn't get a CD but a CDR. Also, I don't have the tracks in the right order, don't know the song titles, have a cover, or much of a clue in general. I was introduced to D4 from none other than Superfan Todd. Started right around the middle with *Midwestern Songs of the Americas* and found my favorite song by the band, "Noble Stabbings!" off the *Situationist Comedy* CD that followed. I admit that I have not listened to this band much through the years since, with the exception of the song I stated that I have downloaded on my iPod. It's due to my neurotic passion of music accumulation that is an overbearing storage issue and doesn't give me a lot of repeat listens on a lot of music. I gave it a three listens and feel the need to have more listens to give it more time to grow on me. The

familiarity of the formula is there, but the new nuances that they have incorporated in these new recordings are what I seem to be focusing on, instead of hearing them as whole packages. Song four, that really isn't song four, is almost ballad-like with its slow-driving rock sound interlaced with a beachy feel that reminds me of the Pixies. That track is, so far, my standout track. Overall, I need to keep this one in the pocket a little longer to see how high it gets in my "like" level. —Donofthedead (Fat)

DILLINGER FOUR: *Civil War*: CD

And here comes this record, a record that has so many people anticipating for it to come out with such retardedly high expectations. Many of my favorite bands use D4 as a positive influence for their own music. There are times where I play a record, just praying to the dark Underlord Gods of Rock that it doesn't suck, and when I found myself placing this CD in the player I whispered, "Please don't suck" over and over until it started to play. Then the song would end and the silence in between was filled with my wishes for the next song to not be dumb. Records are kind of like piñatas in that you just hope for something in there to be good. And if there is just one really cool thing in there, then it was worth busting open. Fortunately, this album was filled with several musical treats that are worth your while. Heartfelt lyrics with arm-raising tunes show that these dudes may be getting older but are in

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no way fucking around. This album is not better than their other albums and it's not the best thing that came out this year for me, but I respect it and will continue to listen to it and warm up even more to each song every time I push play. I, particularly, have warmed up to the little ditty about summer in October and I recommend that you do, too. —Corinne (Fat)

DILLINGER FOUR: *Civil War*: CD

Dillinger Four is my favorite band, so it's going to be impossible for me to review this one without the bias of history and familiarity. I think most people reading this have heard at least one of their albums, though, so we're all in the same boat...right? Okay. This time, they deliver something a little thinner and less immediate than their past albums, but it is still very good stuff. The tracks are comfortable and familiar without sounding recycled, and while you don't the soul-pummeling beatdown that you did with *Versus God*, you still get an enjoyable record with some amazing songs. We're all getting older, including Dillinger Four, and it seems they're aging pretty damned well. —Will Kwiatkowski (Fat)

DILLINGER FOUR: *Civil War*: CD

Dillinger Four's song titles have a way of making you think you're not thinking enough; yet the songs open you up to messages you've been waiting your whole life to receive. Maybe that's what nostalgia is: the creep of lost knowledge. The dynamite

goes off in the basement and you run to the sound, through the flash and the smoke. For what? There is no what. No mission or duty or purpose, just this welcoming chaos in our lives we proudly call punk rock before it spits us out into a stream of recognizable rhythms that guide us out again so that when we stand at the frontier we have the strength to go in either direction. Here's another house collapsing; are you ready? —Jim (Fat)

DILLINGER FOUR: *Civil War*: CD

Ever since my ear first caught "Doublewhiskeycokenoize," I've loved Dillinger Four's insightful vitriol, but after six years without a new album, they seem to have eased up a bit on their frequently delayed new opus, which is more than a little alarming. Sure, the long-awaited LP sports D4 hallmarks like songtitleswithnospace and the odd imagery, but the affair is considerably softer than the band sounds at its best. The increased amount of melody allows the songs to grow catchier, but where's that impassioned fire, that rabid spite from the force behind "New Punk Fashions for the Spring Formal"? —Reyan Ali (Fat)

DILLINGER FOUR: *Civil War*: CD

I have a couple of records by Dillinger Four that I like, but I've never been an absolutely huge fan. Like 'em, especially certain songs, but they never blew me away or anything. That said, I have nothing but rave reviews

for their newest album, *Civil War*. It could be because I got it on CD so I've been listening to it on headphones and outside the house (unlike vinyl), or it could be because it's one of their best records; regardless, I've been listening to it nonstop for the past three days or so. Catchy as hell, with great hooks and lyrics (although I wish I had them written out in front of me so that I could check them all out properly). First song to get played multiple times in a row: "Gainesville." Other standouts: "Ode to the North American Snake Oil," "The Classical Arrangement," "The Art of Whore," "Fruity Pebbles," "Like Eye Contact in an Elevator." Clearly, I will be going back to the other albums I have and giving them a lot more attention. Love it. —Jennifer Federico (Fat)

DILLINGER FOUR: *Civil War*: CD

I have spent the last six years waiting for a new Dillinger Four and Avail records. Thankfully, one of them has arrived and what a record it is! This is simply an incredible record and a welcome comeback for one of the best punk bands of all time. I'll be goddamned if I can name you my favorite songs because I do not have a photographic memory, but this thing is solid from start to finish. D4 continue to be, maybe, the only band I have ever heard who utilize sound clips in a non-annoying fashion. I hate the fuckin' things, but, somehow, this band really makes them work. Great record, great songs, great production, and worth the six year wait. What's up now, Avail? —Mike Frame (Fat)

DILLINGER FOUR: *Civil War*: CD

I'll leave the technical analysis of this album to the staff who will pick up on the nuances (so I don't have to). I liked the first D4 album a lot, but it was raw, angrier, and more accidentally poetic. The song titles were more academic and I was in a completely different place, emotionally and geographically. Bloated, extraordinarily poppy and over-produced, I think I'll scrub off with some Screeching Weasel. From the bathroom, Tom yells, "It sounds like an utterly generic, prep school TV-show soundtrack for bubblegum teenage vampire slayers." Nuff said. —Jessica T (Fat)

DILLINGER FOUR: *Civil War*: CD

I've just been ear-raped with a pixie stick. —Craven Rock (Fat)

DILLINGER FOUR: *Civil War*: CD

It's strange that D4's become such an important band to me after years of resistance on my part. At first, I think I had them confused with Dillinger Escape Plan, so I'd never pick it up. Then, this rad dude Barney bought me the split with Pinhead Gunpowder. That should've done the trick, right? Nope, probably never even listened to their side. So when, years later, Todd Taylor forced *Midwestern Songs* on me, all I heard was a bunch of samples and other hoo ha in between the songs. But then, again due to Todd since I borrowed his truck for a few days and it was the only CD in there, I listened to it. Over and over and over. And at somewhere close

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to the halfway point of those seventy-two hours or so, it just clicked. I never had a mild like in between. Disdain to enamored and instantly hungry for more, listening to everything I could find. They are pretty much everything I believe in, to state it simply. Talk to any of them one night and it will be the dumbest conversation about what a fart can tell you about a person, but then the next night, the conversation is just as likely to leave me walking away with a list of things I need to read because I just felt like a moron. They understand that balance of smart and funny, of fun and anger, of knowing what battles are worth fighting. I mean, shit, my dad called me one day after reading an interview with them to tell me that he finally understood my life, and I thought that was pretty fucking perfect. So, given their place rooted so deeply in this bum ticker of mine, I've been waiting for this album since *Situationist*. When the first track came on, I swore it was Jawbreaker. It's nothing against Jawbreaker; I downright adore some of it, but it's just not right here. It's the recording. It's just too clean for me. The songs are solid and growing on me, and live they're awesome, but it's taking some time. I want it to be a bit uglier and raw, but, I'm sure as I did initially, I'll come around. —Megan (Fat)

DILLINGER FOUR: *Civil War*: CD

Living one state over from these guys, i can say that i've not only seen them a bunch of times, but our bands have

played together a bunch of times, i've drank with them a bunch of times, partied with 'em a bunch of times, lent gear to them a bunch of times, borrowed gear from them a bunch of times, spilled drinks on the gear i've borrowed from them a bunch of times and had drinks spilled on the gear i've lent to them a bunch of times. One could say that my exposure to D4 has been, shall we say, "reasonably ample." Now, here's the weird thing: If you pressed the cold steel muzzle of a fully loaded Walther PPK semiautomatic pistol against my temple and told me that the only way to save myself from perishing at your hand was to hum, sing, recite, quote, or otherwise convey a brief portion of the essence of a D4 song—any D4 song—then you, sir, would be mopping my brains up off the wall and buying lime for a hastily improvised grave, because, even after my self-reported "reasonably ample" exposure to D4, i could not hum, sing or otherwise croon five seconds of any of their songs. Don't remember any of 'em. Don't remember a PART of any of 'em. I've seen Dillinger 4 a SHIT ton of times, and i couldn't tell you what one song of theirs sounds like ((i could, however, recite a few of their great song titles off the top of my head—"The Television Will Not Be Revolutionized" being a personal favorite)). Contrast this with Bill's pre-D4 ((and i think even pre-Scooby Don't)) Blatant Queers rip off band, the Krishnaz—whom i'd only seen once or twice, but can still sing the last line

of that song about the girl who was no longer straight edge ((which is, for the record, "*she's lost her right to pledge the edge*," and no, i'm not making this up)) and maybe a few bars about the song about living in a SuperAmerica™ for good measure. I mean, i saw the Krishnaz once or maybe twice, and i can still remember a part of a song—i've seen D4 a good dozen times, and i can't remember a god damn note they played. Now, that is not to say that the Krishnaz are/were a better band than D4, 'cause they weren't, but it's just frickin' WEIRD that i should be so reasonably well-acquainted with their music, yet still fail to remember a friggin' second of it. When people ask me what D4 sound like, i usually just tell them "amnesia." Maybe when Pat gets naked, my mind just deletes all related memories as some manner of preventative health measure, i dunno. In any event, "*Summer in October*" is a decent enough opening track; it sounds like top-tier Mutant Pop™ bands like the Connie Dungs for the first two minutes, then goes into kind of an extended, minute-plus breakdown, then comes out of the breakdown playing at half the speed, essentially ignoring the catchy ((dare i say "memorable?")) chorus for the last three-sevenths of the song and sounding kinda like those "punk" bands one hears over the radio at Taco Bell™, minus the whole singing-thru-the-nose bit. The whole "completely switch up the song at the two minute mark" is the EXACT type of thing

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eleventh song sounds like, but it has some weird breakdown where the chorus should be. The twelfth song sounds kinda like "The Noose Was Tight" by the Figgs, but not really. The guitar seems to be mocking me personally. *Don't think i'm not taking notes on this insubordination!* "Pretty Little Casualties" is a rousing, album-closing, priest-led stomp, with another one of those stupid breakdowns gumming up the works, though said gumminess is mercifully brief. After deep, post-album introspection, i've come to the conclusion that the disconnect i feel with D4's music stems from the fact that i generally can't figure out what or where their choruses are, or if their songs even have choruses. Throw in a few breakdowns and tempo-switches and i'm completely lost, like i came in in the middle of a movie, sat through a bunch of acts, then left, and it was still the middle, although by and large i was enjoying the film. My suggestion is to eliminate the breakdowns, append "Yeah Yeah Yeah" or similar mnemonic device to the ends of all song titles, and insert choruses consisting of nothing but the song title repeated some power of two times, e.g., "Paralyzed From The Neck Up, Yeah Yeah Yeah! Paralyzed From The Neck Up, Yeah Yeah Yeah!" Ah, now THAT'S slick songwriting!

BEST SONG: "Dis-American Me"

BEST SONG TITLE: "Paralyzed From The Neck Up, Yeah Yeah Yeah"

FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA

FACT: Pat lived in nearby De Pere for one semester and attended St. Norbert's College. —Rev. Nørb (Fat)

DILLINGER FOUR: *Civil War*: CD

Never listened to Dillinger Four before because my friend heard them at some barn party and he mentioned that you, "Can't even square dance to their music," so I blew them off. But, whatever, that guy's an asshole, and this CD came to me with an enthusiastic recommendation from Todd Taylor. Definitely, I trust Todd's taste in music because I went to Fest this year never having heard more than four of the bands that were playing, so I just went by who had been featured in *Razorcake*, and I heard more great music that weekend than I had found by myself in years. Listening to *Civil War* adds to that credibility in my mind, because this CD has quickly found a place in my heart and the rotation on my CD player. The urgent feeling of this album is what makes listening to it exciting: the music is driving and the vocals are raspy and almost whispered, so it's like the singer has to hold back or he'll fucking explode. And then reading through the lyrics and seeing the depth of these perfect, catchy three-minute songs is kind of mind-blowing. "The Classical Arrangement" is an obvious standout, but I don't want to call any one song a favorite, because I want you to understand that pretty much everything on here is gold. I don't give a fuck about what anyone else

in this one-horse town thinks when I blast this CD on full volume at five AM when I wake up to milk the cows. —Lauren Trout (Fat)

DILLINGER FOUR: *Civil War*: CD

Six years in the making, this is one of D4's best albums. They continue their lyrical onslaught of American culture with honest, fatalistic lyrics matched to galloping guitar rhythms and solid drum work. Some of my favorites are "Minimum Wage is a Gateway Drug," "The Classical Arrangement," and "A Pyre Laid for Image and Frame." Inspirational, comforting, kick-ass tunes. Recommended. —Kristen K (Fat)

DILLINGER FOUR: *Civil War*: CD

So, this is it. It's finally here. It's been six long years since *Situationist Comedy* came out (well, honestly, I've only been waiting for a new record for maybe three of those years. I was not quite yet twelve when *Situationist Comedy* came about, and I was still listening to Pennywise records), and now we can finally breath easy. I would like to think that roughly two months after this has come out, I'm over the excitement of first hearing it and can now do a hype-free review. I had no idea what to expect going into this. All I wanted out of this was for it to not be a total shit-fest. It's not. In fact, it's one of the best albums they've put out yet. Granted, it's no *Midwestern Songs of the Americas*, but what else possibly could be? I feel like this is

either on par with or not far behind *Versus God*. However, this isn't your average Dillinger Four record here. The most noticeable change is that the "wall of noise" that they were known for has been replaced with cleaner production. However, the record still has just as many hooks and just as much bite as any record before it. Credit is due to the artwork as well. It's hard to appreciate it when looking at the CD cover, but the LP sleeve shows how much went into creating this (yes, the penguins really were painted right on to the flag). This is getting to be a rather long-winded review, especially as far as my style goes, so I'm going to wrap this up. The music world in 2008 was a place of violent ups and downs, but when the needle plunked down onto this for the first time, I knew everything would be alright. —Dave Dillon (Fat)

DILLINGER FOUR: *Civil War*: CD

The early Dillinger Four EPs never stood out for me. I had no strong feelings about the band either way until I lived in shitty Madison, WI for three years from 1998-2001. I traveled a lot to Chicago and Milwaukee during my time in Madison for shows, but certain regional bands played Madison constantly, including Dillinger Four. The first time I saw them live was in 1998 and they blew me away. Their energy and stage presence was overwhelming. I literally ran out the next morning and picked up their debut full length, and was disappointed. It



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may seem like a classic album now, but Dillinger Four was so terrific live that the recorded versions of the songs paled in comparison. I recently saw D4 play some of these new *Civil War* songs on stage and I feel the same way now. What was awe-inspiring live isn't nearly as incredible on the recording. The production is excellent, so I'm kind of flummoxed as to what I'm not crazy about. I'd go see D4 play a show tonight if I had the chance, but I won't be listening to *Civil War* at home again any time soon. Fans of their other albums will likely love *Civil War*. For those that don't "get" D4, go see them live. You'll understand instantly why so many people are obsessed with them. They're easily one of the best live bands on the planet.

-Art Ettinger (Fat)

DILLINGER FOUR: *Civil War*: CD

There's a catch when your first full length is a classic: how do you follow it up? Even if you come back with something just as great, even if the aesthetic is a little different, you'll still get, "Well, it's no FIRST record..." I bring this up because it's easily been D4's greatest obstacle over the years, all of their output getting "But, *Midwestern Songs*, dude," which is pretty cheap. For once, I will buy the "This is way more polished" argument, but at this point, I can't help but find it a reminder that at heart, this is a pop punk band with a full-on Motörhead attack (and nuts the size of grapefruit). And while, yeah, it isn't *Midwestern Songs*,

you'd have to be a jerk to deny that there aren't a handful of new classics on this one. -Joe Evans III (Fat)

DILLINGER FOUR: *Civil War*: CD

These guys have never let me down! That being said, this is a good record, although it didn't seem to slap me around with the same intensity I initially felt for, say, *Versus. God*. Minneapolis' forever reigning kings of pop punk still manage to reinvigorate an otherwise stale genre of music for me. Everything is still there: witty, sarcastic song titles ("Minimum Wage Is a Gateway Drug," "America's Premier Faith Based Initiative"), the raspy vocals and super melodic guitar, and the distorted, punchy bass lines Patty poops out. For a first time listener, this record would probably whet their whistle and make 'em wanna dig deeper. I hate comparing records, but still find myself more inclined to throw on the older stuff, though. Maybe this record just seems to sound more downbeat than the older stuff. Regardless, this band is always worth checking out! Throw it on loud with a few beers under your belt and it still rocks! -Buttertooth (Fat)

DILLINGER FOUR: *Civil War*: CD

This is interesting; here we have a writhing Wesson Oil Party of Razorcake writers all focused on one album—an unprecedented orgy of sweaty opinions and impassioned squeals of delight or grunts of derision—and I find myself feeling some trepidation about whether to join in or not. Because of the fact

that I hail from D4's hometown and frequent the bar where St. Patrick works, I feel reluctance about all this, similar to what one would feel by the prospect of doing body shots off GG Allin, back when he was still alive and covered with blood and boogers and bile. But the truth is that, unlike the other reviewers gathered here to say smart and insightful things about D4's newest offering, I stand a chance of inadvertently building—and then stepping into—my own booby trap. Simply by virtue of the measly little opinions I decide to decorate this review with. You see, underneath that lumberjack beard and churlish demeanor, Paddy's a pretty sensitive guy, prone to feeling spurned. And as everyone knows, the power we Razorcake reviewers wield packs more of a wallop than a falling cement truck full of dung and American Idol judges. So all it would take is for me to type out one or two indelicate criticisms wrapped in bon mots and god only knows what foul surprises might wind up hidden in my food and drink next time I'm at Grumpy's Bar when Paddy's on duty. I shudder to think of what sort of crimes against nature could be committed with an order of "tater oles" (tater tots stuffed with Mexican cheese) and his famously naked backside—and then served up to a poor, dim-witted reviewer, too drunk to notice odd flavors and unusual textures. Nevertheless, I will soldier on. I took this job knowing full well that someday the butterfly effect of my

words would eventually boomerang back to me in the form of a spurned, vengeful musician. So maybe it would be in my best interest if I kept this fairly short and sweet; get in, make a point or two, and get out, quick as a wink. Maybe that way I'll go unnoticed in this churning sea of D4 reviewers and I'll be able to eat my next order of tater oles without worry of retaliation through befooled bar food.

So here it goes: Dillinger Four has always had, for me, a Janus-like two-faced quality, personified by the characters of Patrick Costello, on one hand, and Eric Funk on the other. It's an admittedly oversimplified take on a band as complex as D4, and it's not meant as a slight to the other two band members, but it does point out the apparent split personality of the band. And it's always been that split personality or balance of opposites that, in my mind, made them a band unlike just about anyone else. From their early days of smelling OK Soda through to Situationist Comedy, there's been a healthy balance of light and dark, sweet and sour, smooth and abrasive, gentleman and cad, Twinkies and meatballs. Or, to put it another way, D4 is a musical example of *vagina dentata*; which is to say that the band has always had a way of luring you in with well-crafted pop punk melodies and then taking you off at the knees with brutal blasts of hardcore savagery. But if this balance can be even crudely represented by *vagina dentata*, then *Civil War* is an album slightly out of balance, an album

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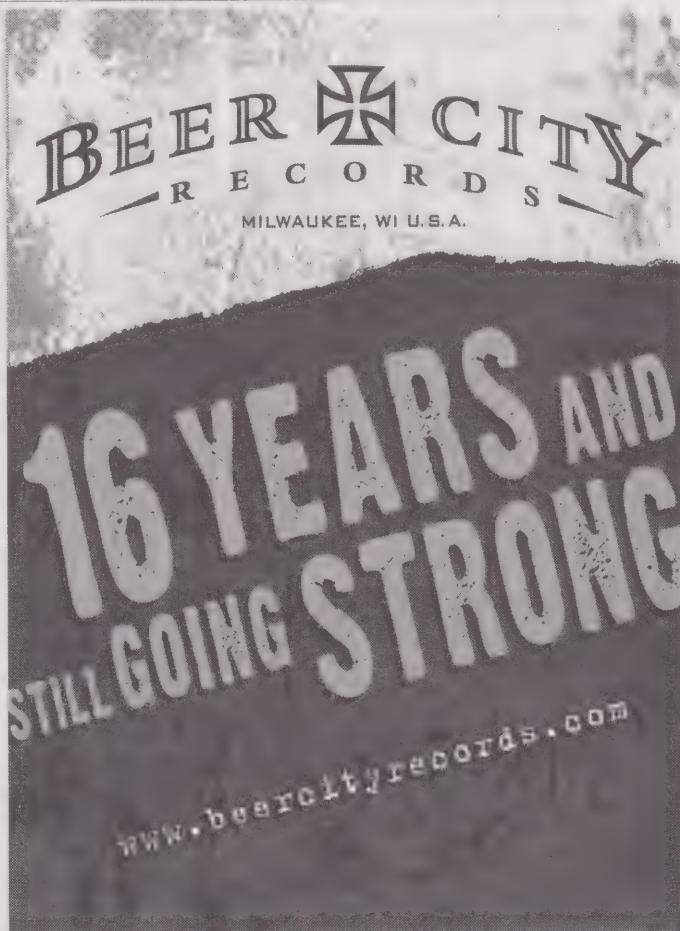
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before he [REDACTED] find(s) it hilarious [REDACTED]? The
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that doesn't have quite the same bite as their older stuff. Could it be that they're suffering from a bad case of torpor brought on by eating too many orders of tater oles with Fat Mike? I don't know, but, whatever the case, it seems like the gentlemanly side of the band's personality has fought off the caddish side on this recording. And I was always partial to that rawer, more unruly side. But this is still unmistakably Dillinger Four, even if it is a more refined version. So I'm not sure there's anything to what I'm saying or not. That vagina dentata crap might be a stretch. Hell, right out of the chute I already really like "Paris Hilton is a metaphor," "Minimum Wage Is a Gateway Drug" and "AMERICAS PREMIERE FAITH BASED INITIATIVE." They rock damn good.

And, really, how can anybody flat out not like D4? They're smart, fun, funny, and well-thought-of—pretty much everything you could ever want in a date. Plus, they look good naked, as anyone who's seen them play live knows. But here's a fact worth considering: though one of the cardinal rules of reviewing anything is to never admit your own fallibility, the truth is I've owned this CD for about two weeks now and have not listened to it anywhere near as much as I prefer to when I've got my serious reviewing pants on. It could well be that a couple weeks from now—after I've listened to it more and under louder and drunker circumstances—I won't have

any idea what I'm prattling on about here in this review.

Believe it or not, that sort of thing has happened before. If I know anything about this band, it's that their stuff seems to grow on me over time. So I hope I'm not setting myself up to look like a laughingstock; I'm not saying D4 is now indistinguishable from the Jonas Brothers or anything like that. I honestly don't think these guys are capable of putting out something that's not at least very good. But maybe that's it—they've just kept the bar so high for so many years that anything that doesn't immediately bowl me over seems like a slight let down. Until it doesn't anymore. But now I'm running the risk of coming off as an equivocating laughingstock. And since Paris Hilton isn't the only metaphor strutting around out there, I'd better just stick with the mule of a metaphor that got me to this point in the review, which is the vagina dentata metaphor. So I'll leave it at this: as good as Civil War is—and as great as it may become—I'd still like to see D4 sharpen those teeth back up to an evilly sharp point again. —Aphid Peewit (Fat)

DILLINGER FOUR: *Civil War*: CD

This is the first Dillinger Four record in six years. A lot has happened since then—a couple *Snakepit* books, some Ramones' funerals, another term of President Bush, a cornball major label band called D4 who confused the fuck out of me in the now out-of-business Tower Records—but these

fellas haven't missed a beat. They're still playing dynamic, pounding, insanely catchy, multi-vocal, fast melodic punk with soundbites and amusing song titles ("Minimum Wage Is a Gateway Drug," "Like Eye Contact in an Elevator"). They slow it down a couple times, and it's great to hear some genuine pop coupled with smartass political punk. Most bands approaching this level of catchiness are juvenile in a bad way, or just whine about girls. These guys are one of the most influential bands in the thoughtful pop punk scene that *Razorcake* covers, their live show is hilarious and incredible, and this CD hasn't left the boombox in my kitchen for the last two weeks. *Civil War* is a terrific surprise from a band who were becoming more of a "was" than an "is." —CT Terry (Fat)

DILLINGER FOUR: *Civil War*: LP

This record is like an optical illusion, first seeing a vase, then looking at the same drawing and seeing two people facing each other. One time I hear pop punk compromised by slick production—guitar sounds that are big but soft, vocals with too much gloss. The next time I'm focused on the brilliant lyrics and the fact that Dillinger 4 has more heart than just about any other band on the circuit. Each listen volleys between these two extremes. There's a lot to scrape off here and I've yet to hear the actual songs, the substance as opposed to the style, clearly. But I keep going

back. I think the latter will win out, but it's a qualified recommendation. —Mike Faloon (Fat)

DILLINGER FOUR: *Civil War*: CD

Though Todd tried mightily to get me to see their inherent awesomeness, I was not an instant convert to the Dillinger Four clan of crazed fan-geeks. I never thought they sucked, but I just couldn't get what all the hullabaloo was about. Slowly but surely, though, their smart-silly persona, witty lyrics, and arsenal of stealthily catchy hooks won me over. On this latest album, their charms are in full evidence, with said hooks battering you 'round the noggin this time around instead of sneaking up from behind, and seriously tight performances of this gaggle of consistently solid tunes making for one fine listen. Yeah, it may have taken me a while, but you can hand me my D4 pocket protector, 'cause a full-fledged fan-geek I be. —Jimmy Alvarado (Fat)

DILLINGER FOUR: *Civil War*: LP

When you write record reviews for various zines, you find yourself in the position of hearing a lot more bands than your average music fan. Most are forgettable, some are great or even downright amazing, and then there is that small handful of bands that change your life. Dillinger Four is one of those bands. I can remember exactly where I was when I first listened to *Midwestern Songs of the Americas* and I remember how it made

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the hairs on the back of my neck stand up. In the ten or so years since then, I've anticipated every record the band has released. I buy them, listen to them, and quickly grow to love them, but they have all seemed to be missing that little spark that the first one had. I can tell you right now that *Civil War* is now my second favorite D4 record. It is really close to having that same feeling that the first record has. My heart skipped a couple of time when I listened to it, and that's a good sign. The band slowed the overall tempo the tiniest bit and the songs don't switch up as quick as an ADD kid with the channel changer, but it doesn't take away from the power of the entire record. I also think that (like *Midwestern Songs*...) it is meant to play as an album as a whole. It all goes together. Now they just need to work on shortening the time between records! -Ty Stranglehold (Fat)

DILLINGER FOUR: *Civil War*: LP

You know what's horrible? I don't think I've ever really listened to Dillinger Four before this album. I was a roadie for a band that played at the Triple Rock (which Dillinger Four vocalist/guitarist Erik co-owns) in Minneapolis and that is a quality venue. The food was good and everyone was kind. So my only loose connection to D4 had been a positive one, yet I wasn't totally sure what this album would be like. Fat Wreck material can be real hit and miss for me. I put in their latest disc, *Civil War*, and was really impressed. In fact, very impressed.

The music is fun as hell, catchy, and the use of two vocalists keeps things from getting boring. D4 also do a good job of contrasting song tempos so that nothing seems too slow or too fast. The lyrics are much more intelligent than most bands on Fat (NOFX, I'm looking at you), dealing with friendships, religion, the passing of loved ones and so on. At thirteen songs clocking in at thirty-nine minutes, you're getting your money's worth. If you've ever enjoyed poppy punk or punk with a pop edge or pop punk or punk pop music or any combination thereof, then you will like this. -Kurt Morris (Fat)

DILLINGER FOUR: *Civil War*: LP

D4 remains the champions of relevance. This record is like some kind of political antibiotic to the bullshit we have to deal with every time we turn on the TV. After all these years, D4 is still angry and still meaningful. And, even on top of the melodic punk that they've paved a decently sized reputation with, they're still trying new, interesting things. Is that a fucking loop pedal he's using? What is this, Enya? What ever it is, it's fucking great. -Daryl (Fat)

DILLINGER FOUR: *Civil War*: LP

Dillinger Four is your friend that's says, "Dude, give me ten bucks and I'll give you a hundred back two weeks from now." And then he doesn't return your phone call for five months. Then, when you see him again four years later, he's wearing nice clothes and pulls out a check and writes a

million dollars on it then hands it to you. It's kind of like that, but instead of a million dollars, you get a really amazing record. -Bryan Static (Fat)

DILLINGER FOUR: *Civil War*: LP

I've found myself listening to this album quite a bit since I got my hands on it. For what seemed like the longest time, I couldn't say why. It sounds like D4, but seems slower and more melodic than their earlier stuff. It's not a straight-up aural assault, but it's neither vacuous nor jejune. It's an honest and passionate album. My favorite tracks appear in the middle of the record. "Minimum Wage Is a Gateway Drug" is perhaps the most depressing song I've heard in quite some time. "The Classical Arrangement" is one of the best commentaries on the religious, spiritual, or whatever that I've heard by way of song. But those aren't the only good ones on here; the album is full of 'em. I guess that's why I've been listening to it so much lately: because it's really good. -Vincent (Fat)

DILLINGER FOUR: *Civil War*: LP

It's a shame that with bands like Dillinger Four, bands with incredibly loyal followings and back catalogs of classic, benchmark records, it's almost "uncool" to say that the new album is your favorite one, that somehow in the last decade this band finally managed to outdo their classic debut LP. Well fuck that. *Civil War* is Dillinger Four's best record. I'm saying it. I don't care what nostalgia you attach to whichever

earlier release, this one's better. It just is. Why do so many people insist on stubbornly holding a certain record over a band's head for their entire career? Do you want your favorite band to continue releasing inferior records for the remainder of their existence so you can go home and spin that same old, worn-out *Midwestern Songs* LP in some kind of smug satisfaction? Just admit it to yourself and everyone around you: this one is the best one. Oh, and you know what? I thought *Situationist Comedy* was the best one before *Civil War* was released. Yep, it's true. I think this band gets better and better with age. Speaking of which, I had the immense pleasure of interviewing D4 about the new record, during which I asked a potentially troubling question concerning the band's advancing age, their penchant for partying and resulting bodily wear-and-tear. Perhaps my whiskey-fuelled wording jumbled what I thought was a perfectly innocent question, but Lane clearly took offense, stating that I was comparing him to a visibly degenerating and undeniably ghoulish Mick Mars. This was certainly not the case and I offer my humblest apology. Luckily, Paddy diffused the brow-furrowing situation with another shot of whiskey (that I initially thought was a glass of whiskey) and a promise to kick the internet's ass when he finds it, thus bringing up another important little nugget: the band's openness and honesty when I broached the touchy subject of *Civil War*'s "leaking" and the ensuing "drama." I don't need to

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go into detail, but the most important thing I took from it, and the interview as a whole, was how comfortable and sincere the whole exchange was—which mirrors perfectly the way I feel about this record. It was immediately intimate and familiar, serious but lighthearted, going right for both your head and your gut. That's just how Dillinger Four operates and it comes across plainly both in person and on their records. And, really, what more can you ask for from a punk band? These four dudes encapsulate everything one should hope to find in punk rock and I think everyone who recognizes that is truly thankful for what they've given us to this point. —Dave Williams (Fat)

DIRTY DEAD:

Carnivorous Lunar Activities: CD

I have spent a lot of time in the shower singing Misfits songs, trying to get my Danzig impression just right. Still, the hours I've put in are nothing compared to what the singer of Dirty Dead has done. One listen to this disc and it's clear that he never reaches for the towel until his fingertips are wrinkled like raisins and he has sung "Hybrid Moments" so many times that every word is imprinted on his vocal cords. Needless to say, their version of that song is good. Their originals are rad. However, the real mind-blower is their Misfits-style cover of Hall and Oat's "Maneater." "Watch out boy, she'll chew you up" gets a whole new meaning. —MP Johnson (Nothing But A Nightmare)

DOA: *Northern Avenger: CD*

On the down side, those who are waiting for *Something Better Change Part 2* will be sorely disappointed. On the up side, the ska that marred its predecessor is kept to a minimum and the overall songwriting here is more consistent and now than many of their other releases this decade. Still a wee bit perplexed on why they cover Credence's "Who'll Stop the Rain," but, on the whole, this ain't as bad as I feared it was gonna be. —Jimmy Alvarado (Sudden Death)

DOPAMINES / TILL PLAINS: Split 7"

Dopamines: The Copyrights have made a crater in the middle of the United States. I'm not saying The Dopamines are stuck in that crater. I'm saying that they're looking at that crater and going, "Fuck... dude..." looking at the immensity of it. It's the strange majesty of a big previous penetration. Some people will commemorate it by putting a sticker on their car, signifying that they, too, saw that fuckin' crater. The Dopamines went into the studio, with the residue of that crater in their minds, and they sat down to write two pretty, simple songs—one of forlorn pop punk and another with that and a dash of folk punk—while not being as weepy, contrived, or as bad as that may sound. I like it. Till Planes: Take this from a dude who's never written a song in his life. These songs are a little premature, where I can almost hear "what's next?" a couple of times before

there's a chord change, tempo change, or lyric. There are good bits, and I'm interested what they'll develop into, but, right now, it feels like I'm sitting in a car with someone who's learning to drive stick for the first time and they have to pause each time to find the right gear while a medley of early Hot Water Music and At The Drive-In is playing on the stereo. —Todd (It's Alive / Soap Hands)

ENERGY: *Race the Sun: 7"*

To call this melodic would be an understatement. To call it hardcore would infer it's hardcore. This sounds like a bad pop punk band trying to cover A.F.I. They cover Bobby Freeman's "Do You Wanna Dance" in tribute to the Ramones' 1977 version, but their take doesn't hold a candle to either. With a lot of people hyping this band, the fact that it's on Bridge9 Records, and their show here in Tijuana coming up, I was psyched to get this in the mail. Unfortunately, as soon as the needle hit the clear purple vinyl, it all went downhill. Don't believe the hype. —Rene Navarro (Bridge 9)

ERGS, THE: *That's It... Bye: 12" EP*

For two weeks I disliked this record because it's reportedly the Ergs' last. "Resented" is more accurate. I wanted to grow old with the Ergs, take my kids to see them. A three-song EP didn't seem to be an adequate send off. I wanted something enormous, cumbersome, more than I could handle. Then I realized that the band's

recent thirty-plus song compilation on Dirlnap serves that purpose. *That's It... Bye* is the party favor from the wake (Wakes should have party favors!), three more Ergs gems that look back as much as they hint where the band might have gone. Now all three songs are stuck in my head and I find myself overanalyzing them. Does "Hope I run into you one day" ("Anthem for a New Amanda") refer to a possible reunion down the road? Is "I'm just looking to get home" ("Piltdown Man") the response? I'll cut out before slipping into obsessive fan fiction-like obsession, but this is a great record. Thanks, guys. —Mike Faloon (Don Giovanni)

FULL OF FANCY / SCREAMING FEMALES: Split 7"

Full Of Fancy: Two songs. "Gym class" sounds like pitch-perfect Unlovable-style pop punk mixed in with a bit of Measure [SA]. (It makes perfect NJ/NYC geographic sense.) "Notebook" sounds like Soviettes meets Mo Tucker singing the songs of the Velvet Underground, where it's openly existential ("can't judge a heart by its lover") while moving right ahead to its intended target. Fun for both the brain and the feet. Screaming Females: This band shares Miranda with Full Of Fancy. Miranda was in the dearly departed Hunchback and her talents trace nicely onto and flesh out a new skull of music. I'm amazed at how, when she's involved, that weirdness sounds so fun, so

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accessible, but it's still weird. Like fun relatives who aren't dangerous, but you're never quite sure what their next present to you is going to be. -Todd (Let's Pretend)

FULL OF FANCY: Sweet Baby Jesus: CD

Did you like the soundtrack to *Juno*? I hated it. This reminds me of that, with more electricity and pop. I got cavities in all my indie teeth (which I swear I had removed). Pity, because I love the voice that comes out of Miranda (also from Hunchback). -Megan (Whoa Oh)

GIFT HORSE, THE: Self-titled: CD

Some real '90s-sounding emo, the way it sounded before it became the glam metal of this decade. Fans of Mineral, Braid, or any Crank! Records compilation would *love* this band. This is extremely well done and I have something of a soft spot for this sound. It's nothing I would reach for over the Texas Is The Reason LP or anything, but it is nice to hear some emo style stuff that doesn't totally suck for a change. -Mike Frame (Poison City)

GIT SOME: Cosmic Rock: CD

A couple ex-members from Planes Mistaken For Stars decided to continue playing music together. This new combo of theirs, I tend to think is better than their previous. Git Some just have a bit more teeth in their sound. There is definitely a heavy Drive Like Jehu sound, but

mixed with a rawer, purposely less polished edge. Also throw in some Hell No and Dead & Gone for the darkness and slow-fire burning in the guts. The playing is tight and, despite being a studio recording, there's an intensity that is usually found in live performances. The songs go from one to the other without pause, and the sequencing is spot on. You start off up, and around the middle, they bring the energy down a smidge, then up again, ending somewhere in between. With a debut this good, I can only imagine what lays in store. -M. Avrg (1-2-3-4 Go!, www.123gorecords.com)

GUT REACTIONS: "Yer So Cruel" b/w "Happening": 7"

Stomp rock you can slam to from the place that inspired millions of Americans to drink their swill and get on the dance floor: Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Pissing in your pants optional. -Jim (Ken Rock, www.myspace.com/kenrockrecords)

HANSON BROTHERS: It's a Living: CD/DVD

Both hockey and punk rock have been a part of my life since I was a kid. It only seems natural that the Hanson Brothers would be one of my favorite bands. If you're not in the know, Hanson Brothers are the alter ego of Canuck punk legends Nomeansno. They're a mutant blend of the Ramones and the foiled-up goons from the movie *Slapshot*. This is Hanson's first live record

and continues with their tradition of spoofing classic album covers by doing Ramones' *It's Alive* this time around. The sound quality is amazing and really captures the insanity of a Hanson's show. All the classics from the band's first three records are here and, as a bonus, there is some hilarious radio clips from an interview with guitarist Tommy Hanson. The flip side of the disc is a DVD of the band's long out-of-print video *All Grain Brewing with Johnny Hanson* with features detailed instruction on brewing your own beer, as well as plenty of clips of the band playing "HEY YOU—LET'S BREW!" -Ty Stranglehold (Wrong)

HELLBILLY BOYS: Self-titled: CD

This Swedish rockabilly band deftly executes and interprets a wide range of American roots musical styles with the expected perfectionist European polish. Amicable, approachable, and fun like the Frantic Flintstones and Three Blue Teardrops. Notably excellent enunciation. -Jessica T (Killer Cobra, highgearmusic.se)

HELLBOUND GLORY: Scumbag Country: CD

This outfit from Reno plays traditional roots rock/outlaw country so pure and classic, they have timeless appeal. Vocals with a deep, honest, booze-soaked timbre channel George Jones, Steve Earle, and Merle Haggard. The richly talented, broad-spectrum band rivals anyone from Bakersfield, Austin, or Nashville. Despite the last

track's title, I do think Waylon done it that way. -Jessica T (Gearhead)

HUNX AND HIS PUNK:

"Good Kisser" b/w "Cruisin'": 7"

From the burning, yearning loins of Hunx and His Punk comes this genius slab of homoerotic bubbleglam pop that's more contagious than the town slut's cold sore. Destined to be hits across the country, from the beach bungalows of Provincetown to the dive bars of the Castro District, these tunes have the unmistakable golden-shower touch of Justin Champlin, who continues his astonishing streak of perfect rock'n'roll releases in '08 (Okmoniks LP, Nobunny LP, Jenkem comp contribution) that are worthy of your hard-earned moolah. "Good Kisser" puts a same-sex spin on the traditional "boy-meet-girl, boy-loses-girl" trope with the boy in question getting his bi-curiosity piqued by the song's narrator. Seth Bogart's vocal delivery is awesomely gay: a fey, casual, seductive whine void of anything resembling innocence. The song ends with Bogart repeating the opening refrain, "I don't think he's gonna miss her/Cause I'm a really good kisser," and you know that the poor straight kid from the beginning of the song never stood a chance. "Cruisin'" is credited to Coomer and commences with a bouncy bass line that's probably lifted from a New Order tune. The keyboards kick in after four bars, as do the vocals, and it's a couple minutes of pure, lascivious

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pop perfection. The lyrics are even gayer than the A-side—"We'll take some photographs/in our underwear/I like my boys like steak/All juicy and rare"—and nothing, I repeat, nothing will be able to dislodge this tune from the deepest parts of your brain. No way anything else tops this for me in '08—**SINGLE OF THE YEAR!**—Josh Benke (Bachelor)

IMPULSE INT'L, THE: *The Real Kid: 7"*

This one is a bit more reserved than their "Arm the Girls" or "Saturday Suzie" singles, but as good. The title track is a rocker that continually builds in tempo from mid pace to something a bit quicker and uplifting. The flip is "The World Hates Me" which has a slight U.K. post punk feel while retaining the power pop these guys crank. I love the guitar sound on this song. Overall, this single reminds me of stuff, like early Nick Lowe and the Plimsouls. Great stuff again. —M.Avg (Deranged)

JAMMY DODGERS / NERVOUS DOGS: *Split 7"*

Nervous Dogs: The Fiya (two dudes, the brothers) / Grabass Charlestons (Replay) chemistry's a go. Fiyanian ache and want to deliver honest songs are paired up with the Grabassian sneak of instrument subtlety. Recap: sounds simple and gritty. It is, but there's an undertow where you've mistaken solid ground. Apropos for Florida, where there are so many swamps, marshes, and sinkholes.

Jammy Dodgers: It feels like they're telling me really bad news, yet smiling, and not in an evil way, but in the therapy-of-getting-it-out-makes-you-dance way. (A This Bike Is A Pipebomb-ism.) Their four songs totally remind me of Cleveland Bound Death Sentence. Fast-swapping female-male vocal leads, delivered like they're all tumbling down a hill while still being able to play their grass-stained instruments. Intelligent songs seeped in personalized history. Me likely. —Todd (No Idea)

JAPANTHER: *Tut Tut, Now Shake Ya Butt: CD*

I saw Japantner awhile ago because I wanted to see what all the hubub was about. I thought they were kinda interesting but I wasn't super into the show. However, after listening to this CD, I'd be inclined to give them another go. It's a really short CD, weighing in at only 37:05, at least sixteen minutes of which are taken up by Penny Rimbaud's poetry (over music). Now this little addition to the album piqued my interest—Penny Rimbaud, probably best known for being one of the founders of Crass—is the executive producer of the album, and also contributes a few spoken word pieces. The relatively lengthy pieces were, for me, mildly interesting and at least worthy of more listening. His voice sounds like Vincent Price reading an Edgar Allan Poe poem, and the content was full of dramatic imagery. Not sure yet how into the poems I am,

but at least one line in particular stood out for me: "What madness is it that we do not see the beauty of love?" In addition to Mr. Rimbaud, other guests include Spank Rock and New Bad Things. Overall, I'd say I like the album. Outside of the pieces where Penny Rimbaud is reading, it's mostly dancey and fun and full of electronic-based spazziness. I'm curious about what types of instruments were used throughout, but, unfortunately, there isn't an insert included, so I guess I'll be left to wonder at this point. I really liked the song where there was a heavier drum beat: "Radical Businessman." I note that, in addition to a few songs about girls, there are also not one but two that appear to be about cops. The artwork is kinda cool—very colorful and with Japantner's name quite well-hidden amongst King Tut's headdress. One thing that was odd is that the CD appeared to be missing one of the songs listed on the back: "Totally Ruling Me." I have a feeling I'll be bringing out at least a couple of the songs from this album at the next party-type shindig at my house. —Jennifer Federico (Wantage USA)

JEFF DAHL: *Back to Monkey City: CD*

Hot damn, a new Jeff Dahl full length is here! Always a big event round this household and this new one is a rager. A heaping helpin' of '70s rock in the mix and the band is really gelling after a few releases together. This new one is turbocharged and sounding better than ever. More than twenty full

lengths later, I still can't get enough Dahl hooks and licks. Once again, this is a perfect cocktail of the last fifty years of rock'n'roll mixed up and firing on all cylinders. Amazing songs, killer guitar tone, and great vocals; what more can a rocker ask for? —Mike Frame (Steel Cage)

JEFF WAGNER'S TUNNEL OF LOVE: *An Eternity of Love: CD*

I do believe that this is the most awesomest singer/songwriter record that I've heard in a month of Sundays. Imagine Tom Waits meets Rob Zombie with a dose of German expressionist painting thrown in for flavor. Visceral and highly nutritious. —The Lord Kvelduflr (Glorious)

KATJONBAND: Self-titled: CD

Katjonband is a collaboration between Kat from the Ex, and Jon Langford from the Mekons. Those familiar with both bands know this is something that deserves to be checked out. There are obviously traces of both bands in here, but, overall, these two have created something of their own. The songs have a stripped-down quality about them. At the same time, there are a few things going on to make it more than something straightforward. A piano comes in and out in the songs, the drums shuffle and bounce, and the guitar is serene and clean, then noisy and jagged other times. Moods range from dark to light, and somewhere in the middle. I can't get these songs out of my head. —M.Avg (Carrot Top)

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KRIEGSHOG: Hardcore Hell: 7"

Bombastic hardcore from these Tokyo, Japan thrashers. Full-on distortion, blown-out bass lines and thundering drums blast out of the speakers. Vocals that remind me of Lip Cream and the Stalin. Music that has the noisiness of Exclaim meets Disclose yet it still retains an underlying structure of solid music. Not for timid ears because this stuff is not pretty. This is the second press issued out of Germany. The first press, I read, sold out fast. The way things sound, I think this release will also go out of print quickly. —Donothedead (Heart First)

LEGENDARY RAW DEAL:***Outlaw Man*: CD**

P. Paul Fenech's LRD have perfected twanging, reverb-heavy spaghetti western guitars and trademark growling, dirty, makes-me-want-to-be-bitten baritone/bass vocals. Although about half of the tracks on this album are exemplary covers (Danzig, Johnny Cash), Fenech's original tunes are equally excellent and maintain continuity. I didn't even have to listen to this (but I did) because I know this album forward and backward—hands down the best cover of "Jackson" and one of my standing favorite albums of all time. Cherry Red reissue, #74 in the psychobilly series. —Jessica T (Cherry Red)

LET'S DANCE: Summer Breeze: 7" EP
...i hate to be the bearer of bad news,

but somewhere around 2010, or whenever it is that people realize that the teens are actually a new decade, and not just a continuation of whatever the hell decade this decade is called, all this neo-Exploding Hearts stuff is gonna be swept away in some as-yet-unforeseen cosmic *fin-de-siecle* subcultural housekeeping, and Let's Dance are likely going to be out of a (metaphorical) job. i mean, i don't know, even their choices of t-shirts and belts in their photos seem to be agonizingly over-thought. *How much longer can we possibly care about this shit?* Until said cosmic metamorphosis occurs, however, i guess there's no prevailing reason for me not to admit that i like the formal aspects of Exploding-Hearts-core as much as the next guy, which is why i kinda wish that snare drum sound wasn't so god damn obnoxious on the a-side ((which is, in a nice touch, deemed the "odd side"))). The first song on the "even" side whizzed by without making much of an impact; the second song was a cover of "Bodies" by the Sex Pistols. Now, as any old-timer will dutifully attest, at one point in time, "Bodies" was the high water mark of punk rock filthiness—the bastion of foulness against which all else was, at that time, measured. "Bodies" was the one song you REALLY wanted to crank out your window at the neighbors when you were in high school ((to underscore your acrid bitterness, your ocean-deep alienation, and

the pristine fidelity of your \$69.95 JCPenney® stereo system)), yet high school ((or, really, any)) bands rarely covered "Bodies," mainly because it was harder to learn than the relatively direct "God Save the Queen" and "Holidays in the Sun," and it never really sounded right when you played it. And never has "Bodies" sounded UN-RIGHTER than this! I mean, the guy sounds like he's singing the right words, but they don't sound like they're getting sung in the right places. The Sex Pistols' "Bodies" was offensive on the grounds of foul language and shocking subject matter; the Let's Dance version is actually offensive due to its shocking ineptitude. Then again, the vinyl looks pretty cool so fuck it. **BEST SONG:** "Summer Breeze" **BEST SONG TITLE:** "Let's Dance" worked pretty well for Chris Montez... **FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT:** "Ben - 31 Teeth. Thomas - 6 Strings. Matt - 4 Strings. Byron - 2 Sticks." $31 + 6 + 4 + 2 = 43$, which is my age. *Stop making fun of me on your records!* —Rev. Nørø (Longshot)

Just when it starts to feel like this subgenre's seen better days, these guys come along and infuse it with some solid tuneage and more than enough attitude. Lords? Not just a clever name, in this case. —Jimmy Alvarado (Gearhead)

LOSTBOYFOUND:***One Voice Over the Airwaves*: CDEP**

Taunt, metal-tinged punk from this Aussie outfit. Another well produced mix from the folks at the Blasting Room makes this a sonic sundae that hits the spot. "The Priest Verses the Beast" is a catchy sing-along that even boasts a sample from *Pump up the Volume* (the only decent flick Christian Slater ever did). Expect to hear more from this band as they try and make us forget about Kylie Minogue. —Sean Koepenick (Pee)

LOT LIZARDS:***Nightmare Creep b/w Liquor Store*: 7"**

Über lo-fi from Britain that's more stripped down than the Gories and noisier. No bass, just hollerin' and beatin'. —Jessica T (Yakisakana Reds)

LOVE TAN: Self-titled: 7"

I'm speechless at how kick ass this Love Tan record is. It ranges from cacophonous and absurd ("This Land Is No Good") to brilliant lo-fi rocker ("Brush Your Teeth") to strange, electro performance art soundtrack ("Berlin Rumble Part 1")...and that's just the first side! Side two includes two of the best songs I've heard in

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the past couple of years. "Horse" is clearly the anti-hit, a dark, drugged-out, overcast tune with brief flashes of brilliant electric Albini guitar freak out and weird, impenetrable lyrics. "Ring Ring" closes the record with a lolling, bizarre vocal delivery and the best guitar riff you'll hear all year. This record is all over the place stylistically, yet manages to remain cohesive in its sound. Definitely one of the top 5 7"s released in '08. -Josh Benke (Sweet Rot)

LOVER!: Man in the Woods b/w Foxhole Madness: 7"

The a-side sounds like an ultra-treble, lo-fi Memphis garage punk version of Supertramp. The b-side sounds like the Small Faces, if they were one foot tall aliens with big yellow heads and their eyes on stalks. There is strange potential in this music, but I am quite unable to articulate that any further. I thought that perhaps wearing the 45 sleeve as a hat of sorts would stimulate my articulateness, but, after some time so engaged, that avenue turned out to be a bit conceptually hollow. **BEST SONG:** "Man in the Woods," I think. It sounds so dramatic and foreboding! Unfortunately, I can decipher no words, leaving me to invent my own story, likely involving wolves and gingerbread. **BEST SONG TITLE:** I'll say "Foxhole Madness," because it doesn't remind me of "Boys in the Trees" by Carly Simon. **FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT:** The

cover art was taken from an ad for Lucky Products, Inc.'s 100 Piece Toy Soldier Set, which ran on the back page of *Forever People* #11 ((among others)), Oct.-Nov. 1972. *Made of durable plastic, each with its own base!* —Rev Nerb (Rob's House)

MADISON BLOODBATH: Gittin' Loose with...: CD

Punk played with a country twang, or country played with punk ferocity. Either way, they do a good job of it. Tuneful, driving, and solid. These guys really hit their stride mid way through this disc with songs like "Pick Axe," "Prom Night at the Burn Clinic," and the piano-driven "Oh, The Places You'll Stay." A lot of broken hearts and alcohol consumption going on, along with some soul searching. —M.Avg (A.D.D., myspace.com/addrecords)

MAN AT ARMS:

A Waste of Time and Space: CD

I really love this CD. It strikes me as an intersection of the jerky white guy art funk of the Minutemen, the more frantic tunes from Nomeansno, and the sparse/loud dynamics of I Hate Myself. All this is topped off with lyrical input that could very well come from all the aforementioned bands. When tightly wound art punk like this is pulled off right, there is nothing better to me, and these guys fucking nail it. All the more impressive is that this is a two piece. Bands like the Minutemen, Nomeansno, Devo, and

the Urninals get me really excited, because they make the type of odd and offbeat but punk as fuck music that I wish I was playing. To me, this band gets the same facilities all worked up as those bands do, which is rare. There's a lot of music I love, but bands that are both challenging, genuinely enjoyable, and somehow oddly different are a rare breed, but these guys do it for me. Plus you gotta admire a band that has the balls to name one of their songs "The Best Song Ever." —Adrian (Joyful Noise)

MARKED MEN:

"Fortune" b/w "Like Robots": 7"

When so much rightness is staring you in the face for years on end, one reaction may be to take a band for granted. Thankfully, for those of us who find a true solace in great, current music, I've not only looked forward to, but then have cherished the Marked Men's output over the years. Their sound has developed from a "sounds like great band X mixed with great band Z," to rising up to one of the bands at the top of the pyramid. They defined one of the best possible scenarios for DIY punk. Musically, the Marked Men change the weather around them; their songs aren't going anywhere, except round and round on turntables the globe over. And they broke up. There's a forthcoming record, and it's my suggestion that—if it's within your means—to seek out their entire catalog. Here are two more great songs in a long, threaded string of firecrackers that've pop-pop-popped

without a dud in the bunch. This is my gold fever. This is what gives me irrational behavior. It's so good and I'm so stoked that I have it my possession so I can listen to it whenever the mood hits. —Todd (Dirtnap)

MASSEHYSTERY: Vår Del Av Stan: LP

For anyone who's unaware, Sweden's Masshysteri rose from the rubble of one of the best punk rock bands of the last few years, The Vicious. A bit of an instrument shuffle, an even heartier helping of Robert and Sara's dual vocals, and a debut 7" later and we've arrived at Masshyteri's first full length offering. This record is, pretty simply, fucking amazing. The obvious Wipers/Misfits worship of The Vicious is much less apparent in Masshyteri's songs. The tracks on *Vår Del Av Stan* are of a more stripped down pop formula while incorporating a wider array of styles and influences into the approach. The choruses are incredibly memorable and have me singing along constantly in my best (read: terrible) syllabic attempt at Swedish. Essentially, what you've got here are eleven dark-yet-upbeat pop punk rockers that I really feel should appeal to basement dwellers worldwide, regardless of which subgenre you might call home. The songwriting and sincerity in these songs is universal, a characteristic you'll find is a constant in the Ny Vag collective. There's something truly special going on there. —Dave Williams (Ny Vag, www.nyvag.com)



MEASURE [SA], THE: Songs about People... and Fruit n' Shit: 12"EP

Sometimes, I feel like crying at the overwhelming beauty that's capable of showing itself amongst so much bleakness. Songs have been helping dissolve some of the sandbags in my stomach lately; have shored up my faith that I'm not going to drown in the landslide I feel I'm caught up in. It's a measure of faith, and I have a ton in The Measure [SA]. They're like a bunch of friends all coming over at once, unexpectedly, all with their own forms of good advice, all with fun and interesting things on their minds, playing songs with more and more confidence in who they are, separately and together as a group. I've been a fan of the band from the get-go and they keep on getting better and better. If you like songs about romance that cover people, places, DIY culture, ideas, and times, a romance that goes beyond simply plotted story lines or beyond solely between two people, I suggest you play this 12" so you can feel the bass through your feet, read along to lyrics, and soak it all in. -Todd (Don Giovanni)

MODERN DAY URBAN BARBARIANS:**Sludgemouth: CD**

I puked a little bit in the back of my mouth and I swear my testicle tried to climb back up into my body when this came on. It's that bad, as in mentally and physically painful, to listen to. -Ty Stranglehold (www.mdub.com)

MONIKERS / DELAY: Split: 7"

Delay: The only band I know of that makes me wish I was young. And I don't mean quasi-college years young, or even high school young. I mean like thirteen. When you first started to realize the world was fucked up, and you wanted to do something about it. Songs about snow days and how fucked up movies are, and how love was supposed to be something new that would save you from your generic state and give you real meaning. And then looking back at it, and realizing how wrong and sad we ended up making it all. These are easily the three best songs Delay has done, and that says a lot.

Monikers: While Delay makes every word count, Monikers contribute an overall feeling that gives these songs a tone of helplessness and hope at the same time.

Every time I hear a new Monikers song I'm shocked, because their songs are so simple and catchy, but they somehow manage not to tread any ground. My only complaint would be the group yelling in the background of these songs. I'm glad that they had fun with the recording, and it could have come out totally fun if done right, but, particularly on the last song, it's a bit distracting. I wish they would have exercised a bit of restraint in that area, because I really want to love these songs, too. -Nick Toerner (Kiss Of Death)

MOTORCYCLE BOY: Self-titled: CD

Yes, a reissue of one of the best albums on the 1990s! A long-lost classic from one of the most overlooked bands of

the past couple decades. Most of that is due to the glam punk tag and the fact this was produced by Sylvain of the New York Dolls. This would lead most to believe that this sounds like something that it is not. For the most part, this disc is chock fulla Cramps/Beasts Of Bourbon/Gun Club/Scientists style rock and is as good as any of those bands. There is the occasional nod to Johnny and Syl and the odd veer into solo Iggy territory, but, for the most part, this is killer bluesy garage rock at its finest. This reissue includes nine bonus tracks, including the ripping first single. There is also a bonus DVD of live and studio performances. This is an impressive package. Highest possible recommendation! -Mike Frame (Nickel And Dime)

MURDER BY GUITAR: Self-titled: 7"

I'm not sure if Sweden's Murder By Guitar has ever given England's Gordan Gano's Army a listen, but they both seem to share an effortlessness approach to their songs. Not like they wish they were doing something else, but it sounds like they could be doing ten other tasks while they belt 'em out and no one would be any wiser. Maybe it's the fact that the songs, musicianship, and recording are top notch or maybe they actually are playing with their tongue and I am none the wiser. Either way, this is some splendid, jangly '60s pop rock that has as many hooks and soul-melting guitar leads as you can fit on a three-song 7". -Daryl (Alien Snatch)

NAKED RAYGUN: All Rise: LP

There's something about the way so many of their songs start in the middle and extrapolate outwards that will always make them both interesting and inspiring. I think this is important because it signifies that there was already a conversation going that they were dead set on continuing with an urgency that can't be understated. Disclaimer: I went to see Naked Raygun for the first time last year with a friend, but the Arrivals and Tiltwheel opened up for them and by the time Naked Raygun took the stage I was about ten thousand light years beyond wasted and streaking toward darkness. Six months later, my friend put this gorgeous milky vinyl reissue in my hands. Holy Fucking Shit. -Jim (Haunted)

NITAD: Island Kam Man Inte Hindra Sig Sjalv: CD

Crank this up and kick some furniture over. Raging hardcore from Sweden with a massive dose of rock to make this blaze out of control. Nitad are loud, in your face, and it's a great thing. The songs are fast paced, the rhythm section rumbles, guitars are loud, slightly jangly, and the singer bellows. Nitad is easily one of the best bands going these days, and this collection is a must-have. Think I'm kidding? Get this and hear for yourself. Then send me a thank you note care of Razoreake for hepping you to this chunk of auditory awesomeness. This disc also collects their *Varlden Mästen Do EP*, material from the split with Kvoteringen, *Ge Oss Mer EP*,



a comp track, and the 2006 demo.
—M.Avg (Kranium)

NITAD: *Mina Tankar: 7"*

One-sided single of sheer power. Their *Ibland Kam Man...* LP is a killer, and this is a rager as well. A bit looser and belligerent, but it's what you need. The title track is fast and tight like the other material. My favorite track is the second, "Bla Bla Bla," which reminds me of the Lewd, musically and vocally. A lot of swagger and attitude. Enough to warrant hovering over the turntable to place the stylus back at the beginning. The third and final song is "Dum I Huvudet," which is a fast and spastic number. Nitad. Get familiar with the name. They're going to be your new favorite band within the next year. Also, there are only two hundred of this diamond in existence, hand numbered, and only available direct from the label. Get on it!! —M.Avg (Kranium)

OBSERVERS, THE: *Down on Today: 7" EP*

Rough-and-tumble demo versions of four Observers tracks (three of which showed up on *So What's Left Now* (one of 2004's best records). These four songs from 2003 are very 4-track bedroom recording-y, yet showcase the cocoon which The Observers would quickly emerge from. What these are are rough sketches and under paintings of really great songs. I wouldn't say that this is just for completists—as it's a bit more interesting than a mere mile

marker—but it's not as essential as any of their proper releases when they were an active band. Silk-screened covers, limited to 1,000.—Todd (Taken By Surprise, myspace.com/takenbysurpriserecords)

OLEHOLE: *Holehole: LP w/CD*

First off, it's pronounced "O-lay Mole-ay" and the album title is pronounced "Hole-ay Mole-ay". Kind of stupid, I know, but, thankfully, the music makes up for it. Their sound is a mix of Hot Water Music and Red Animal War (especially on the vocals). It includes members of Burial Year and the Ghost and was recorded by one of the dudes from American Steel. The LP (in your choice of white or clear red) comes with the CD. The first track, "Gatekeeper," isn't necessarily the best song to start out with, as the singing vocals just sound silly after the fierce yelling with which it contrasts. And "Treble Hook" has a really annoying guitar part that it keeps coming back to. But beyond those two weaker tracks, there's a good intensity and passion that comes from this band, the kind where you can tell they're excited to be doing what they're doing and believe in it. It's been hard to figure the lyrics out. They require some thinking and I get a feel here and there about where they stand on things. From what I can tell, they like to question the traditional order of authority and the traditional order of things, and as someone who has been doing that a lot in my life lately, I can

totally get behind that. —Kurt Morris (Underground Communiqué)

P.J. BONNEMAN: *Jeg Kendte Dem Ikke: 7" EP*

Armed with the switchblade knife he holds on the record sleeve, and, I'm assuming, an enormous bottle of Gammel Dansk, P.J. Bonneman slashes through three great-sounding home recordings on this debut, solo, 33 rpm 7" EP. "Fri Kærlighed" is a lively piece of aggressive, lo-fi, Rezillos power pop sung in Danglish. I'm not exactly sure what the song is about—I don't understand Danish and there's not a whole lot of English to be heard—but I definitely hear a "fuckin' hippy" in there towards the end of the song and that's a sentiment that everyone should be able to get behind. "Hey Ronni" is the musical equivalent of taking a stroll through the countryside with your sweetheart on a Sunday afternoon. Clad in a leather jacket and shod with black Chuck Taylors, of course. The melody could have easily been written by King Louie for the Exploding Hearts and the lazy guitar riff will linger in your head long after the song is over. This tune could brighten the day of even the most stoic, hard-assed Scandinavian. While the A-side will appeal to popsters, the flip side is ass-kicking TOUGH! "Jeg Kendte Dem Ikke" has an unrelenting beat and lyrics that are snarled more than sung. Bonneman has a real knack for writing a tune and moves between genres

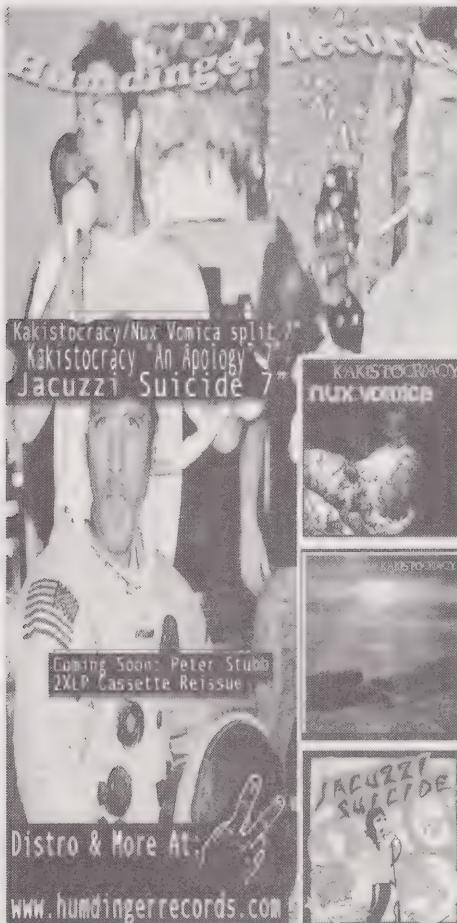
effortlessly. —Josh Benke (Spild Af Vinyl, www.spildafvinyl.dk)

PEGS, THE: *Livin' at the Surf Motel: 7" EP*

If the Beach Boys had listened to what the voices in their heads and the drugs had been telling them to do, rather than their manager/father and record label they would still have to pray to be as good as The Pegs. Southern California surf punk that oozes attitude problems and reckless behavior while sweeping the floor with tightly wound songs full of razor-sharp hooks and punch-your-face-in guitar playing. This 7" could have fit in nicely on Hostage Records. —Daryl (No Front Teeth)

PINK LINCOLNS: *Back from the Pink Room: LP*

A fancy, high production re-issue of Tampa, Florida's Pink Lincoln's first studio record from 1988. If you've never heard of them before, think Angry Samoans, Vindictives, and split releases with The Queers and Screeching Weasel in the early '90s. If that doesn't help, think of a rusty knife stabbing you in the ear by a bunch of snotty malcontents whose Ramones pop sensibilities are as evident as their unresolved hostility issues. If songs were cars, the Pink Lincolns would be spray painted, on blocks, and in a weeded front yard. The stereo would work and there'd be a functioning BBQ where the gas tank used to be. Life's pretty shitty, and it gave the Pink Lincolns a lot to sing about. A



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welcome reissue. —Todd (Jailhouse, www.myspace.com/pinklincolns)

PITY FUCKS, THE: Self-titled: 7" EP

Mangled drunken garage party boogie with commendably loutish keyboards that would not sound out of place on the "Busted at Oz" album ((then again i probably haven't listened to that album in twenty-five years so don't take my word for this)), or maybe one of those not-quite-punk fringe bar bands of the early '80s that had a keyboard but were kinda funny and obnoxious so you didn't mind watching the drunken college guys try to quasi-ironically punk out to the best of their limited abilities by hopping around hanging themselves with their skinny ties on the dance floor or what-not. Or possibly what the Urinals would have sounded like had they had to play biker bars in Pennsylvania. Actually, no, not so much like that, now that i think about it. Yet, out of this drool, sputum and mayhem shoots golden beams of drunken profundity: "The last time I saw you you was lovin' me good / But then you broke my heart like I knew you would!" That's actually a pretty fuckin' right-on line. Plus i like how the keyboard player appears to be playing one-handed, and seems to have obtained the full measure of his chops from that one song you learn when you're like eight years old where you mostly just roll your fist over the three black keys. *BRING THESE VASSALS TO ME!* The czar wishes to cut a f'n rug! BEST SONG: "Why

Right Now?" BEST SONG TITLE: "Why Right Now?" FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT: The record label states that this 45 RPM record is "unbreakable," yet i could not find it in my heart to test this claim by giving the record a good sharp whack against a pinball machine, so the veracity of this assertion remains completely bound to the realm of speculation at this point. —Rev. Norb (Felony Fidelity)

POLLUTION: *Nasty DNA*: Tape

Pollution play blasted-speaker hardcore that will appeal to hoodie-clad dorm room moshers and crusties who name their dogs after brands of cheap beer. The songs maintain a nice tunefulness, even as the music grinds down to a headbanging crawl. At times, Pollution reminds me of faster Melvins material, or Born Against at their dirtiest. This is a full-length cassette and it's totally kick ass. —CT Terry (C6)

PROSTITUTES, THE:

Kill Them before They Eat: CD

I can recall back in the early '80s when the split first developed between the negative punks and the positive punks. Since I had already done some serious time living-fast-and-nearly-dying-young, I decided to throw my lot in with the positive punks. Yet I found that I had some rebellious urge that would not let me fully embrace total positivity. I found that I had to have my negative punk reprieve from time to time to keep my sanity and my sense of fun intact. In the mid-to-late '90s The Prostitutes

rallied my negative punk excitement level better than any other band of that time period. They managed to craft a handful of classics that still scorch my soul every time I listen to them. After breaking up in their originating city of Harrisburg, PA, Kevin Prostitute has started up a new Prostitutes in Long Beach. This new album definitely sounds like The Prostitutes of old. It is slightly more polished-sounding than their older recordings but not enough to put anyone off. Kevin's pissed-off snarl still carries this music head and shoulders above other bands that I hear mining this same sound and vibe. The best comparison I have for this band might be The Pagans. I've listened to this album many times and I don't hear any weak tracks. Of course, I'm also looking for something that sings me the way that "Teenage Girls" and "22" did eleven or twelve years ago and, right now, this album's "They're All Dead" is totally doing that for me. —Chris Peigler (May Cause Dizziness, www.mcdrecords.com)

PROVOKE: *This Is Real*: CD

The best NYHC I've heard in years! And these guys are from Australia! There's no metal posturing, or pussy emo singing breaks. Just pure, unadulterated NYHC style that hits like a sledgehammer between your eyes! Chunky guitar sound, solid bass, thundering drums, and a vocalist who yells from the gut. The songs move moderately quick with breakdowns, time changes, and gang choruses. All

the elements required that makes this style exciting. Fantastic album the whole way through. —M. Avrg (Pee)

QUADRAJETS, THE: *WFO*: CD

In the mid-to-late '90s, there was a resurgence of dirty, hyper-driven blues-based rock'n'roll. And with any unexpected tsunami where money is to be made, the suddenness of its appearance made it somewhat difficult to initially separate the gold diggers from the true shakers. I put the Quadrajets in league with the BellRays and Zen Guerilla. Their sets weren't based on theatrics as much as catharsis, wasn't so much lip-puckery strut as maniacal involvement with their instruments. They didn't have pleads of "testify" for the audience to be believers in what was being lightning-bolted from the stage. This CD is a collection of many of their early Sympathy, Estrus, and Arkam singles. These fine fellows from the South channeled the molten rocks of punk through the forlorn loss of blues, and their music's well worth keeping in print and remembering. A high water mark of the genre, for sure. —Todd (Arkam)

RANTOULS, THE: *Chug a Lug*: 7" EP

There's a simple version of this review: if you like late '60s bubblegum pop—Archies, 1910 Fruitgum Co., and the like—you're going to like this record. There's also a director's cut of this review: the Rantoults are a side project from Gavin May, singer/bassist from the Fevers. The man is a pop genius. He

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knows what he loves and his records never miss the mark. The Rantouls sound a lot like the Fevers and that's as it should be. We don't want to hear his ska/metal fusion project. We want him to continue reinterpreting the Buddah Records catalog. -Mike Faloon (Chocolate Covered)

RATIONAL ANIMALS:

Perception Becomes Reality: 7"

The reason I picked this out of the box of records at 'Cake HQ was the note accompanying it that, among other things, said, "Total late-era Black Flag style hardcore." I enjoy latter day Black Flag, almost to the point of being an apologist. (For the record, I prefer *In My Head* to *The First Four Years*—not that I dislike *The First Four*. Still, I'd take *Damaged* over either of them, especially if "T.V. Party" wasn't on it.) That aside, I must say that, while Rational Animals do make definite nods to late-era Black Flag, they don't encapsulate that sound and feeling. First, RA are too fast and too hard to get that comparison from me, though, like I said, they do make definite nods here and there. Second, RA seem more like they're entering into psychosis. BF seemed like they were past the psychotic breakdown, like they were full-blown menacing, maniacal lunatics at that point. RA's songs, lyrically, deal with anxiety and how to interpret the world around them. Later BF never came across that linear to me. They were

always beyond insanity, like a bunch of turd-juggling weirdos. So, while I find the comparison to be faulty, I don't find that these kids (who are just out of high school) are bad at their craft—far from it, actually. If I were to compare them to BF, I would say that this is what you might have hoped for BF to become. That is if you were dissatisfied with latter day BF, which I am not. —Vincent (Feral Kid, crotchotrecords@gmail.com)

REFLECTED: *Paradise Found*: CD

It's quite coincidental that this band is called Reflected, because what we've got here is a bunch of narcissistic, phony-ass, whiny, emo, poonhound punk played by a bunch of Hungarians. Do they even have malls in Hungary? —Craven Rock (World)

REVENGE OF THE PSYCHTRONIC MAN / THE FRACTIONS: Split CD

ROTPM play anemic, lightning-fast hardcore punk that crams lots of builds, bridges, hooks, and breakdowns into songs that fall just shy of ninety seconds. The Fractions do two songs of fun-loving punk with swingin' ska guitars, and a third song that has horns and sounds like Snuff. The cover photos of a guy in a horse mask fighting a guy in a Dalmatian mask made me laugh. Both bands are from Manchester, U.K. —CT Terry (TNS)

RICH WHITE MALES, THE / CUMMIES. THE: *International Losers*: CD

Rich White Males: Q: What if Olga

from the Toy Dolls was American and started a pop punk band and they sounded really good? A: Rich White Males. Cummies: A bit of polish here, a touch-up there, make your singer stop impersonating Ben Weasel, and you have yourself a pretty good band. —Bryan Static (Punk n Junk)

RIPSNORTER: *Infected*: CD

Ripsnorter has spent many years bloodying their knuckles for the honor of the horror punk genre. Why do they do it? Are they sick? Are they masochists, secretly getting off on pouring their glistening guts out on self-released discs and in front of feeble crowds in dirty dives? Why do all of these horror punk bands do this to themselves? In Ripsnorter's case, it's obvious. They do it because they love it. That love comes through in songs like "Infected," in which the victim of a zombie bite begs for a bullet through the brain. The scenario isn't simply played up for shock value. Like all good horror, the focus is on the emotions. You can hear the narrator's conflict, asking to end a life not lived to the fullest in order to prevent him from putting anyone else in the same position he's in. Here's hoping Ripsnorter keeps waving the horror punk banner well past the impending zombie apocalypse. —MP Johnson (R.I.P., www.ripsnorter.com)

RUBELLA BALLET:

Anarchy in the UV: CD

Wow, long has it been since I've heard this band. What you get here is part one of a two-part retrospective of

this long-running U.K. peace punk/goth band, founded in 1979 by one cat from Flux Of Pink Indians, two of Vi Subversa's kids, and a woman named Zillah, whose preference for day-glo is responsible for that color scheme's existence in some factions of the gloom'n'doom set. The tunes here come from the *Ballet Bag* tape, the *Ballet Dance* EP, the *At Last It's Playtime* LP and the *Money Talks 12"*, plus two unreleased tracks. Though a good chunk of this is nearly thirty years old, their Siouxsie-meets-Crass sound is still as catchy as ever, and too much of the subject matter covered is still painfully relevant. Though my prior exposure to 'em was a bit limited, I've always had a soft spot for this band, so it's nice to revisit, to get a better feel for their output, and I can't wait for the second part of this retrospective to come out. Seeing as they're apparently still alive and kicking, hopefully some new material is also being worked on. —Jimmy Alvarado (Overground)

SAFES, THE: *Sight of All Light* CD EP

"Sunshine is finally mine/Everything's going to be okay." Sounds like Shirley Temple optimism, right? Blinders on. Denial in full effect. But *Sight of All Light* is a different enchilada altogether. Intense pop tunes played through clenched teeth. Trying to convince yourself that it's all good but knowing otherwise. These songs are heavy and dark. They feel like that The Safes are venting and purging. *Sight of*

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All Light captures the same tone that's come into my head every time I've thought about national politics in the last eight years, only with guitars. I hope the Safes come back to the pop side on their next record, but this is a really good departure. —Mike Faloon (O'Brothers, www.thesafes.com)

SERIOUS GENIUSES, THE: You Can Steal the Riffs, But You Can't Steal the Talent: CD

For me, the reason for reviewing handfuls of bands that I've never heard of or listened to before doesn't simply lie in creating a dialogue about underground music, but in the search to uncover new material that should warrant attention that it wouldn't necessarily normally receive. After about a dozen samples, I've finally found my first band of this kind. Playing agile power pop/punk that's got a little bit of a mid-'90s indie rock vibe to it, the Geniuses pull out some seriously fantastic guitar intros that sound buoyant and fresh, evoking a nostalgia for something I can't place right now. Most of the songs tend to be crowded with gang vocals at the end, which can get a little repetitive track after track, but would probably work to fine effect in getting crowds riled up at a show. My only real gripe is the vocals that resemble a more nasal and high-pitched version of The Loved Ones' Dave Hause's singing. Make the vocals a bit more sparse and lower-pitched and let the sound on this awesome album run the show. —Reyan Ali (Kiss Of Death)

SHAKING HANDS, THE: Self-titled: LP

When I hear some jackass saying, "There's no political punk anymore," I just wanna punch the douche. Granted, there are less shrill, blunt political songs asking Phyllis Schaffley to "ram it up her cunt" (The Dead Kennedys said it; I'm just quoting.) nowadays, but I think this is a good thing. Why? Because I find no shortage of smart folks taking stock of their lives and looking at pictures much bigger than they are—from the neighborhoods they live in, to the national political scene, to the glaciers melting (all which The Shaking Hands deal with), but it's all wrapped together into a seamless burrito of life. It's one big log. Feeling like absolute shit is directly tied in with a dickhead running the country with regressive policies. And this makes the songs more timeless than being so literal and making a song called, say, "Sarah Palin Would Look Great with a Moose Cock Moustache," that has its place fixed in such a short period of relevant time. (Quick, who was Phyllis Schaffley?) So, I put the Shaking Hands in the same gruff-voiced, anathemic vein of No Truth Lies and Watson, with some distant echoes of the Beltones in the background. Powerful, motivating songs that sing about a life looked at fully, and, often, achingly, in a subtle way that doesn't need to separate daily life from political statements. —Todd (ADD / Kiss Of Death)

SHIRKS, THE: Self-titled: 7"

The sides of this record should have been reversed, since the A-side consists

of two generic, predictable, sub-Problematiques-esque tunes that blow past the threshold of the mundane into the realm of the banal. They're fast and loud and not over soon enough. The B-side, while not breaking any new musical ground, has a much more memorable melody and rocks in a manner more closely resembling the Dead Boys. The chorus is sticky and snotty, with a message everyone can relate to: "Get out of my house, get out of my bed, get out of my sight/Get out of my heart, get out of my head, get out of my life." Fuck, I've listened to "Get Out" at least seven times in a row now, and it gets better each time. Beautiful in its simplicity, simple in its execution, and exactly the kind of song one needs to hear post-breakup. It's a goddamn punk masterpiece. High recommendation solely on the basis of "Get Out." Also comes with a download card so you can put these three songs on your computer. —Josh Benke (Big Neck)

SHOREBIRDS: It's Gonna Get Ugly: LP

One 7", a split 7", a track on a compilation, and now an LP that some are claiming to be the best record of the year. In the short period of time that the Shorebirds were a band, they definitely produced some great music that not only sounds great but is also quite the testament to doing things yourself. Many people may have initially sought them out on the merits of their previous bands, but there is no denying that their catalog

of songs stands on its own in both originality and quality. As for this particular slab of wax, if you haven't been paying attention and I'm sure most people know, there're some pretty hard times ahead and this LP is playing over the house speakers of the collapse. Highly conceptual while still being poppy and rocking; it's hard for a band to go out on a higher note. —Daryl (Rumbletowne)

SILVER COCKS:

Holiday in Auschwitz: 7"

Solid. Imagine a really angry version of Sham 69 and you've got it. —The Lord Kveldulfr (Zodiac Killer)

SLEAZE, THE:

Smokin' Fuckin' Cigs and Other Hit: 7"

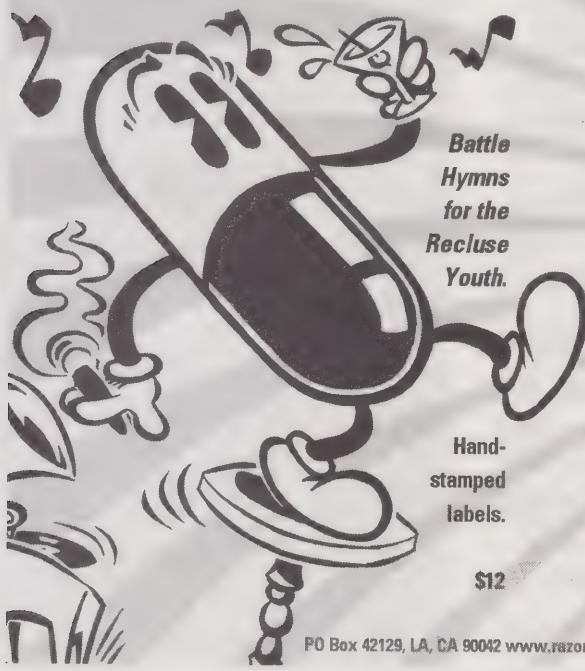
Inhalin' Fuckin' Helium and Other Hit! Unless, of course, this 45 actually plays at 33, in which case this is idiocy on so many levels as to be both note and praise worthy. Some day i will treasure this record deeply, provided i remember that i do, indeed, own it. BEST SONG: "Smokin' Fuckin' Cigs" BEST SONG TITLE: "Smokin' Fuckin' Cigs" FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT: It is impossible to note the band's label without thinking of that one Negative Approach song. —Rev. Nørø (Fashionable Idiots)

SMUT PEDDLERS: Failure: LP

It still takes me a bit to wrap my head around the fact that the Smut Peddlers' *Failure* came out over



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thirteen years ago. Really? Those unfamiliar with the Smut Peddlers, let's just say that I think that John Ransom should become ambassador/MC of Orange County punk and that the band's songs always remind me of Polaroid pictures. They're definitely not the most "pro" band (I say that in the best way), but they definitely capture a raw, intimate snapshot of specific moments. Those moments are filled with being pissed about yuppies fucks, PC fucks, drugs (pro, con, plus, minus, snort, needles, pills) and hostility towards the increasing safety measures that society is imposing on itself (pads, helmets, smoking bans). It's probably the most honest—and definitely a controversial—version of lifelong punkdom that's come from Orange County. (No one I know says "The OC" without some retribution.) The hidden engine of the Smut Peddlers is Julia Smut, the drummer. And I'm just guessing here that she's the one behind the gorgeous and detail-oriented 500-copy reissue of this self-released record. She sent us two versions. One comes in a sewn canvas sleeve, silk-screened, signed by the entire band, on booger and old-bruise yellow marbled vinyl. (Fifty made. Check out www.smutpeddlers.net) The other is a more traditional cardstock sleeve, on purple-swirly vinyl, but also comes with an honest-to-goodness photograph of the band, a sticker, a button, and a flyer that will come

out in different configurations. Talk about a band taking care of its own legacy and embracing some of the awesome possibilities that only the vinyl format can offer.

—Todd (Ransom)

SONIC CHICKEN 4:

"Midnight Girl" b/w *"Toe Man"*: 7"

A fun little 7" here: two short and sweet garage pop gems, akin to King Khan & BBQ Show and Nuggets-era rock and/or roll, though perhaps more in the "Louie Louie" or "Wooly Bully" school of things than say, the Sonics or the Seeds. These guys are apparently from France, too, which is cool if you're into that sort of thing.—Jeff Proctor (Rob's House)

STAR FUCKING HIPSTERS:

Until We're Dead: CD

Of the myriad possible explanations that come to mind as to how this ended up in my review box, I like to think/hope it was put there by someone who knows full well my disdain for this sorta pop/punk/ska dreck and wanted to mess with my noggin a bit. If that's the case, okay, heh heh, you got me. Oh, on a totally unrelated subject, please accept my preemptory plea of total ignorance as to how copies of the book *Living with Chronic Bedwetting* and 50 Cent's *A Gangsta Tribute to Liberace* CD got in your review box but if I had to lay blame somewhere, I'd say Dale put them there. —Jimmy Alvarado (Fat)

SURRENDER: *Paper Thrones*: LP

Surrender is a very good band. I want you to know that. *Paper Thrones* is as much a social project as it is a music project. Being so, the message—an important one of, basically, peace—is all over this record. In and of itself, that's not a bad thing. But, when the message eclipses songs is when I lose interest in repeat listens. (This may sound strange, but I liken "talky" peace punk albums to comedy albums. They can be totally worth the first couple of listens, but I don't find myself itching to put them on over and over again after I've digested what they're putting down. George Carlin and Richard Pryor included.) And, so, in another digression, *Paper Thrones* reminds me of two unlikely musical/art signposts: Bongwaters' *Too Much Sleep* and The Clash's *Sandinista*, where there are great songs nestled inside of those records, but it's just short of a chore to sit through the languid, ho-hum parts to get to the stuff that sounds like pure fire, like how I'd want a revolution to sound like. If that's all a bit "what the fuck are you talking about?", try this: didn't live up to the promise of the lead-up 7"s. —Todd (Thrillhouse)

SUSPECT PARTS:

Seventeen Television: 7" EP

The drumming herein is ascribed to Chris Brief, and, assuming it's the Chris Brief I know ((and love)), the a-side is vaguely stunning in its utter absence of Chris' best trick—extended eighth note cymbal rhythm blasting—substituting instead a hi-hat-heavy, accent-on-the-

two-and-the-four, vaguely British neopunk/dancey beat thingie, not unlike what the U.K. Subs, Anti-Nowhere League, and Blitz did when they were trying to be gay dance homos circa '81 ((before the money came back around for punk rock, you understand)), except that this beat sounds FIERCE and ROCKIN', which I suppose would make it the first successful application of said beat since that Steve Diggle solo EP with that "Shut Out the Light (Rothko)" thing on it, so there. Sounds a bit like the Skids, but more inclined to raw guitar savagery as opposed to echoey bagpipe envy, with a song title that was almost certainly stolen from the same piece of toilet paper Les Hateginks scrawled it on. On Zee flip, "Lesson" is comparatively more Briefy, while "To Stone" is an ethereal cover that I am not familiar with, nor particularly inclined to seek out information on. *Featuring a Clorox Girl!* I hope it's Debbie. BEST SONG: "Seventeen Television" BEST SONG TITLE: "Seventeen Television," and if I had to choose whether "Seventeen Television" was a better song or a better song TITLE, it's definitely a better song title. FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT: February 1865 was the only month in recorded history to not have a full moon. —Rev. Nør (17 Television/Deranged)

TOO MANY DAVES:

A Shit-Faced Odyssey: 7" EP

In this size-ist, dumb-ist, clothes-ist shit stain of a culture we call society,

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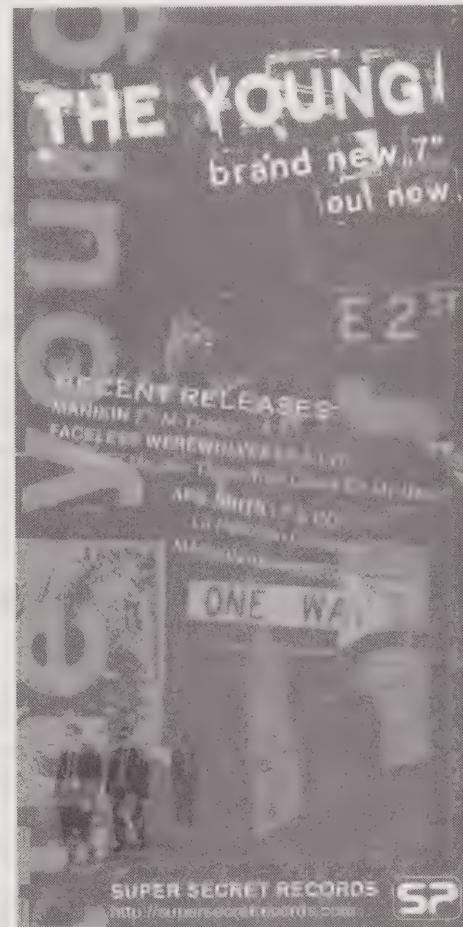
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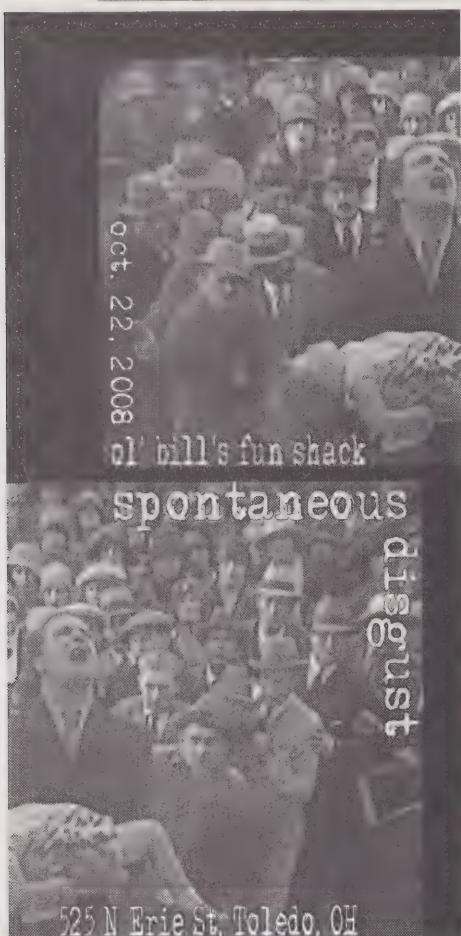
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there was something missing: a party soundtrack that celebrates fat dudes partying without their shirts off in not-necessarily-homosexual-but-it's-cool-if-you-are situations. This is like the Village People's party record (I'm just assuming there is one) for those of us who mix up malt liquor for champagne and "bad ideas" for "life purpose." And if "Fat Doodes" isn't the catchiest rallying cry of the DIY disenfranchised to be played like Gary Glitter at half time, I don't know what is. Is it hot in here, or is my beer crying on its own? PS: Ladies can be doodes. -Todd (ADD)

TOTAL ABUSE: Self-titled: CD

I think Total Abuse's abrasive artwork kinda led me to assume that I was in for some GG Allin-esque, moronic shock punk, and so I never bothered to check them out until hearing this LP. Foolish. This record ripped my goddamned head off. Insane, redblining punk rock from the Poison Idea school, just dripping with anger. Seething, desperate and one hundred percent convincing. I need to see this band live. Chock up yet another killer release for Deranged Records. -Dave Williams (Deranged)

TRADITIONAL FOOLS, THE:

Self-titled: LP

It takes a special kinda... *something*... to lead your album off with "Davey Crockett" by Thee Headcoats and to hyphenate the word "valley" between the "a" and the "l", but white vinyl

means cool, 45 RPM means loud, and the Traditional Fools' drooling recklessness, one-take garage smasherooni is actually a life-affirming necessity, much like free bacon, or reasonably priced biscuits & gravy. Reminds me a bit of the Statics, if the Statics were more rabidly howling and recorded in the Snivelling Shits' practice studio. *Taste the burnt fudge of their mania!* BEST SONG: "Snot Rag" BEST SONG TITLE: "Valley (Of The Jams)", but only because "Snot Rag" isn't that inventive. FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT: Liner notes claim that "Kill Someone You Hate" is a Redd Kross song. Technically, it's a RED CROSS song, innit? -Rev. Nerb (Wizard Mountain/Make a Mess)

TRISTESS: Hog & Låg Blues: LP

Sometimes it's really hard to describe a record that is absolutely fantastic. It's like, where do you begin? This is by far the best record yet from Tristess. Everything they've done prior pales in comparison. They definitely have the early European punk sound nailed down tight, and though the sound is retro, they sound refreshing. "Jag Tillhor Mig" is an excellent track that has a bit of a Stooges sound in the guitar, and the singer, Triztano Cazanova, adding the "ch-ch-chs" sends the song over into the "repeated play before listening to the next track" category. The organ on "Hg & Låg Blues" and the sax on "Paralyserad Generation" raise this record even

further up the measuring stick of what makes a record great and not run of the mill. Definitely one of the best of 2008. -M.Avg (Deranged)

UH-OH: Underneath the Stupid Sun: 7"

Garagey slop rock from Milwaukee, featuring members of Holy Shit!, Lefty Loosie, and Louis Tully. I really like this, but I wonder if my many years in Beer City have tainted my judgment. Don't know, don't care. Regardless, if you're an aficionado of lo-fi, this is a good one to pick up right soon. -The Lord Kveldulf (Repulsion)

UNHOLY GRAVE / BLACK SISTER: Split: EP

Unholy Grave churn out three lo-fi grind numbers. The usual from them. I know a lot of folks love this band, but, really, they're nothing special. Prolific, yes, but nothing that needs to be pressed to vinyl. Black Sister, however, are the reason to pick this up. Blazing grind with low end and some cool metal guitar leads. One original, "The Hunt," and a Anti-Cimex cover ("An Fheadhainn Neo-Chiontach"). These guys deserve a full record. -M.Avg (Problem?, myspace.com/problemrecords)

UPTOWN BUMS: Self-titled: 7"

This is a three-song single on an Italian label by this Denton, TX band. Yes, you Marked Men fans will find a whole lot to like here. This band straddles the line between garage punk

and power pop with a speedy delivery. A little distortion on the vocals adds a rougher edge to the proceedings. Fans of Nobunny or Douchemaster Records will wanna check this single out. -Mike Frame (Shake Your Ass)

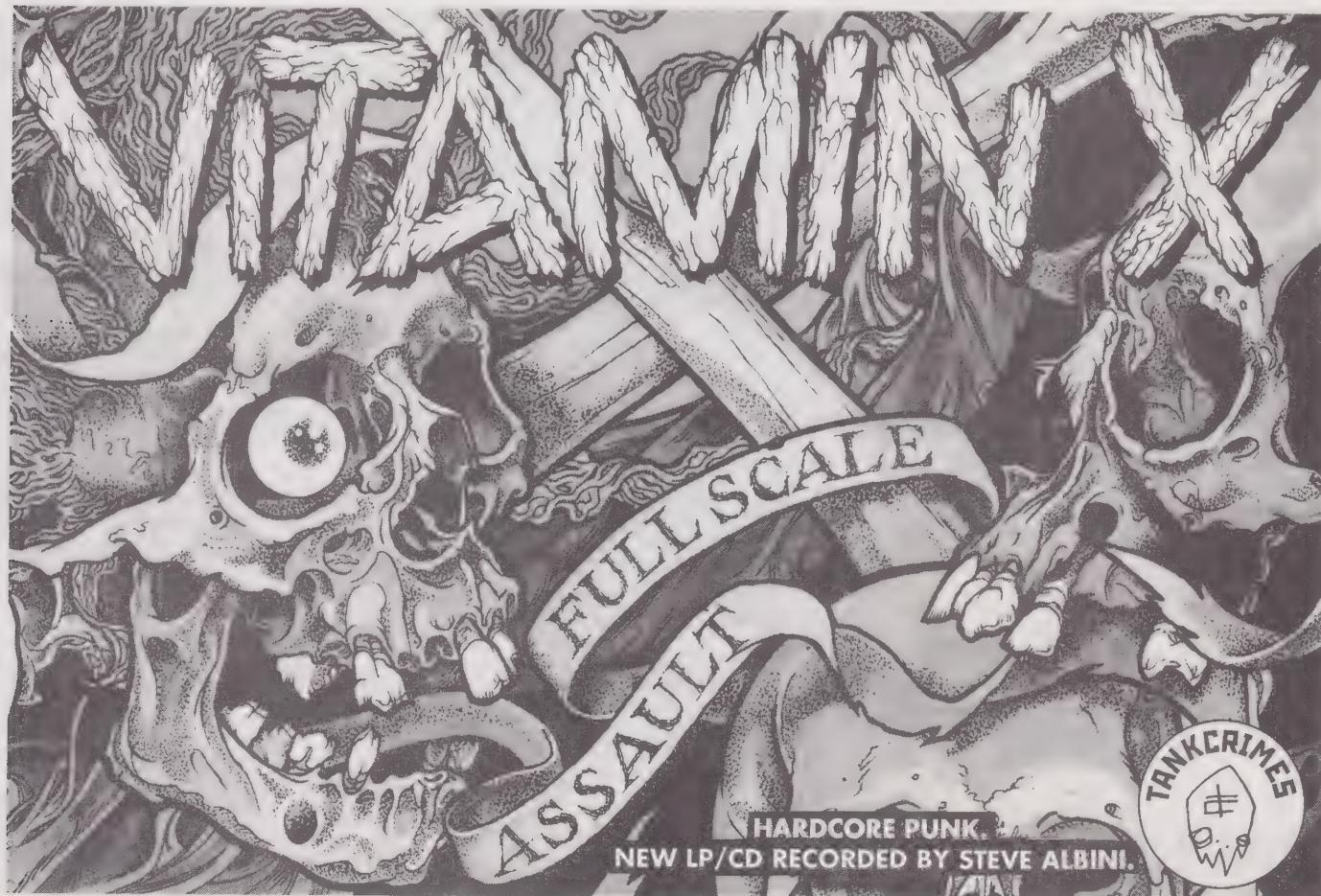
VARIOUS ARTISTS: This Comp Kills Fascists, vol. 1: 4 x LP

Assembled by Scott Hull (Pig Destroyer, Anal Cunt, Agoraphobic Nosebleed), these are four LPs of overview of the grind and hardcore scene, it is, if anything, a fun game to see if you can tell the differences between powerviolencegrindhardcore bands. I'd chuck a copy at a fascist's noodle in support of this comp, but I don't know any (besides my grandfather, and he's soon to the grave anyways). Standouts are Agents Of Satan, Kill The Client (whose drummer plays like a wizard from spacehell), Insect Warfare, Man Will Destroy Himself (welcome break of not blastbeats) and Total Fucking Destruction. -Andrew Flanagan (Deep Six, www.deepsixrecords.com)

VARSITY WEIRDOS:

High School Teen Party: 7" EP

The cover art looks like a cross between the Beatnik Termites logo lettering and a Mutant Pop label ((to say nothing of the band's name being an apparent cross between Junior Varsity and the Weirdos)) thus it should likely emerge as no surprise that this ep is four shots of tight, bouncy, happy Ramones-core.



At some point in time—maybe today, maybe next year, maybe ten years from now—I am going to put on a record of tight, bouncy, happy Ramones-core and it is going to be SO fucking good and SO fucking right that I am going to drop my Powerade® on the floor and stand in that ever-widening puddle of Arctic Shatter™ and scream “YES! THIS IS IT! THIS IS THE ANSWER TO ALL LIFE’S PROBLEMS, BY GAR! THE MYSTERIES OF THE UNIVERSE REVEALED IN A MICROCOOSM, I SAY!!!” This is not that record, but it’s decent enough that it suggests that this day is not as far off as some might suspect. I guess I’d better stock up on the Arctic Shatter™. BEST SONG: “High School Teen Party” BEST SONG TITLE: “I Don’t Go To Parties” FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT: Guaranteed all downstroked chords! George Tabb would be so happy... -Rev. Nørø (It’s Alive)

VENA CAVA: Weapons of Mass Communication: CD

Some speedy and ragged pop punk here, reminding me of This Is My Fist or Measure [SA], off the top of my head. Six tunes in quick succession and I am also hearing elements that remind me of everyone from Lemuria to Toys That Kill in parts. This seems to be the perfect band for the average Razorcake reader. Melodic but still raw, Vena Cava have put out a real solid disc here. —Mike Frame (ADD)

VERMILLION SANDS: Self-titled: 7”
This is very catchy, rocking stuff; the perfect thing for a cold November night. Good female vocals, a little lapsteel guitar, and synthesizers added to this stripped-down rock outfit really round out this sonically pleasing and uplifting 7”. These three songs carry a very similar beat, yet manage to subtly differentiate themselves. This is definitely worth picking up. —Rene Navarro (Rijapov)

VERMIN, THE: Joe’s Shanghai: CD

The Vermin from Vegas are back with their sleazy, Dwarves-influenced scum punk. It’s all mid-tempo and kind of generic, yet I totally fucking love it. Some of the songs are more melodic than others, but they’re all catchy, especially on a second listen. They use distorted vocals to good effect and I bet these guys tear it up when they go on in the wee hours of the night in their hometown. One of the songs is called “Gimmee Hot Sushi,” with lyrics so vile and cliche that only a humorless dipshit couldn’t fall in love with The Vermin. —Art Ettinger (Wood Shampoo)

VIOLENT HEADACHE: The Singles Collection: CD

This discography was done right. The liner notes are informative, including cover art, member line ups, lyrics, and a brief history of how this collection came together. What you get is eighty-four songs of filthy-

as-hell crusty grindcore. Starts with their material from the Unholy Grave split and works backwards to their first vinyl appearance (a split with Agathocles). Great stuff, and despite there being a ton of songs here, you can get through this in one sitting without thinking “Did I hear that already?” There’s progression in each release. Pick this one up. —M.Avg (Six Weeks)

(VLAD AND) THE IMPALERS:

Self-titled: CD

Woah, this one is all over the place! Some absolutely great moments and some downright head-scratchers on this one. I’m digging the yellin’, not so much the singing. This one is all over the friggin’ map. Even the token ska song! It’s 1998 again! They surprisingly pull it off without completely throwing off the album. Pop punk, vampire/zombie shit, speedy punk’n’roll. I’m seeing this mix of sounds within one band more and more lately, and I’m not sure if I enjoy it. Vlad gets the stamp of approval this time around, but next time I wanna see them pick a sound! The faster and rougher, the better. —Will Kwiatkowski (Geykido Comet, www.gcrecords.com)

WEIGHT, THE: Are Men: LP

The first full length by The Weight is called *Ten Mile Grace* and came out on Sabot productions a few years back. It is, very likely, one of my five most listened to records

of all time. Perfect production, astonishingly good songs and amazing lyrics. This record is the complete package. Needless to say, I had very high expectations for this new LP. After being bummed on the name and the artwork of the record, I was concerned that the move to Brooklyn had done this band in. I am not a big fan of titles that seem to be irony laden and I am not a fan of indie rock/hipster style artwork. However, one spin of the LP and I realized that I had nothing to worry about. This record is a C-L-A-S-S-I-C! The Weight made a second record that doesn’t surpass the first, but meets it head on. Goddamn, what a songwriter this gentleman is, to say nothing of the perfect voice and fantastic production. Joseph Plunkett is someone that can hold his own with Steve Earle, Uncle Tupelo, Drive by Truckers and, possibly, even Lucinda Williams—that is a tall order. *Are Men* has blazed its way to the top of my year end list and I will be playing this amazing record for years to come. —Mike Frame (Colonel, myspace.com/thecolonelrecords)

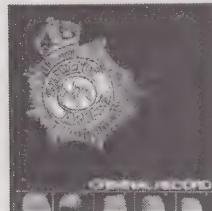
WHITE LUNG: Self-Titled: 7” EP

Neo post punk with a U.K. influence and some strains of no wave seeping in at points, though never entirely taking over. The drums have a big sound and primal beat with the guitars dark and slightly creepy. Three solid songs of this stuff.

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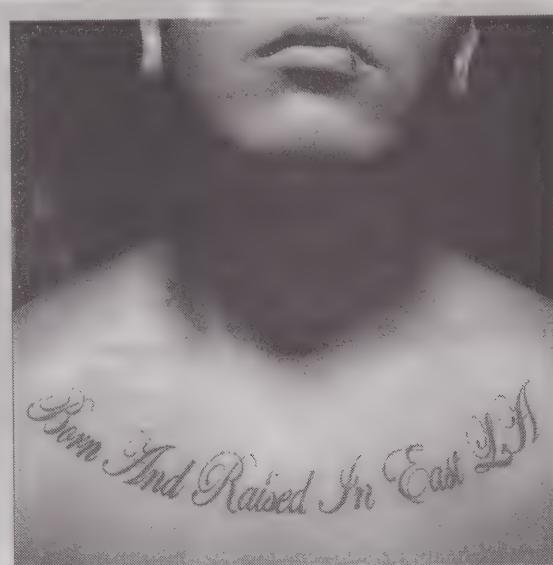
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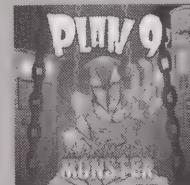
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They sound minimal at points then layered at others. A good mix of all that makes this music interesting. -M.Avg (Deranged)

WHO CALLS SO LOUD: Self-titled: 2 x 10"

Before commenting on the music, first let me take a moment to comment on the album artwork and the physical records themselves. Let me say that I am officially enamored with this album's presentation. Double gatefold sleeves, with coloring, cartooning and scripting reminiscent of Shel Silverstein's artwork in *The Giving Tree* (one of the finest children's books ever, I might add), give way to two striking 10" discs inside. The first is a lovely green and black marble record, and the second is colored in yellow and black marbling. I must say that before listening to the album, I got the feeling that if the same effort was spent in creating the music as was dedicated to putting together such remarkable album artwork and visually appealing records themselves, I would be in for something special. Musically, this release does not disappoint. What we have here are eight big, powerful, mega-epic emotional hardcore jams, in the vein of bands like Yaphet Kotto or Mohinder. Screaming and sincere vocals with personal, poetic lyrics that are accompanied by heavy and bombastic playing so tight it sounds as if it's ready to burst open and spill all over the place. This sounds like

they would have fit in perfectly ten years ago on Ebullition or Gravity. Very well done all around, this would be a nice pick-up for those of you who haven't traded in all of your hardcore albums for pop punk records yet. -Jeff Proctor (Adagio 830)

WILD ZEROS: *Homesick: 7" EP*

Self-proclaimed "Loud Punk from Bordeaux," these guys remind me the most of the Mullens, who were from Dallas, which I believe is one county over from Bordeaux. Nice mix o' 70's Ramones-isms, organ-driven 60's garage-isms, and contemporary ruckus-isms. Not to mention DMZ cover-isms! If this would have come out on Get Hip, it would be among the rawest records on the label; if it would have come out on Dionysus, the other records would shit themselves in terror. BEST SONG: "Homesick" BEST SONG TITLE: "Something To Do" FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT: Recorded on my former guitarist's 43rd birthday! -Rev. Nørø (Frantic City)

WOLVES AND THIEVES / BASTARDS OF YOUNG: Split: 12" LP

Goddam this is a great record. Old skooly street punk on both sides but I think Bastards Of Young get the nod on this one. While both have that Foamers-without-the-horn-section sound the Bastards have the old punk/new folk vibe I've been grooving on lately. Highly recommended.

Even the Jack Kerouac and Neal Cassidy cover art is super geigh. -Jim (Swagger City, www.myspace.com/swaggercityrecords)

WOODBOX GANG: *Drunk as Dragons: CD*

Alternative Tentacles brings you some bizarre Americana music that will appeal to everyone from Mojo Nixon fans to alt country followers. There does not seem to be any electricity involved. This is made strictly with mandolin, dobro, fiddle, and drums. Just a string band with some percussion and, lyrically, along the lines of Tom Waits or Johnny Dowd. If you are a fan of this type of stuff, you will be hard put to find any better than this. -Mike Frame (Alternative Tentacles)

YOUNG, THE: Self-titled: 7" EP

I don't care how old the members of the Young happen to be. They could be in the thirties or forties for all I care. What is undeniable, no matter their ages, is that they have produced a phenomenal debut EP that transcends musical subgenres, delivering raw, honest emotions set to crackling hardcore, emo (the old kind, not the dog shit that clogs up popular radio today), and garage punk. "Get Out of My Face" is right up in the listener's (face), a vitriolic lyrical and musical spasm that sits somewhere between the Carbonas and Marked Men on the punk rock musical spectrum. "Hurt Each

Other" recalls mid-'80s Dischord bands like Embrace and Rites Of Spring with its desperate, heart-wrenching vocal delivery. Early Jawbreaker and Promise Ring are especially evident on "Erase You," and "Nobody Cares" leaves rubber marks on the blacktop as it screeches at you like a souped-up muscle car. Austin, TX is lucky to have these bucks-of-early-chronological-age sleeping in its gutters. -Josh Benke (Super Secret)

YOUR PEST BAND / THE MISCASTS: Split: 7"

How is it that Japanese bands are able to take the refuse of American punk rock and turn into something better than the first iteration? Your Pest Band should move to Oakland and perform as Rancid until someone stops them. I love the imagination/foresight of whoever thought it was a good idea to include the lyrics 'cause "Dead men cross their arms with serious faces/I know their true colors" is a great, great line in any language. The Miscasts sound like a Florida band only drunker, yet their lyrics make more sense. Huh. -Jim (Snuffy Smiles)

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- **608 Kisses**, PO Box 781, La Crosse, WI 54601
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- **Acetate**, PO Box 412605, LA, CA 90041
- **Adagio**, 830 Marchlewski Strasse, 10243 Berlin, Germany
- **Alien Snatch**, Mörkeweg 1, 74199 Utergruppenbach, Germany
- **Alternative Tentacles**, PO Box 419092, SF, CA 94141-9092
- **Anti-Corporate Music, Inc.**, PO Box 190339, Nashville, TN 37219
- **Arkam**, 1925 Hwy. 69 S., Savannah, GA 38372
- **Australian Cattle God**, 1306 E. 6th St., Austin, TX 78702
- **Autistic Youth**, 1930 SW 13th Ave., PDX, OR 97201
- **Bachelor**, 5421 Adnet 186 Austria
- **Bakery Outlet**, PO Box 4054, St. Augustine, FL 32085
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- **Blackwater**, PO Box 5223, Portland, OR 97208
- **Boom Chick**, 6405 Morrill Ave., Lincoln, NE 68507
- **Bridge 9**, 119 Foster St., Bldg. 4 Ste. 3, Peabody, MA 01960
- **Brisk Range Rejects**, 9240 Rivers Rd., Tower, MN 55790
- **Burn Bridges**, 2981 Falls Rd., Baltimore, MD 21211
- **Burning Tree**, 10153 ½ Riverside Dr., Ste. 247, Hollywood, CA 91602
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- **Exigent**, PO Box 24, Kaysville, UT 84037
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- **Fashionable Idiots**, PO Box 580131, Minneapolis, MN 55458
- **Fat**, PO Box 193690, SF, CA 94119
- **FDH**, 2008 Montrose St., Philadelphia, PA 19146
- **Felony Fidelity**, 7135 SE Woodward St., Portland, OR 97206
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- **Grunnen Rocks**, PO Box 6058, 9702 HB Groningen, The Netherlands
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- **Haunted Town**, 3057 N. Rockwell St., Chicago, IL 60618
- **Heart First**, Landsberger str. 146, d-80339 München, Germany
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- **It's Alive**, 11411 Hewes St., Orange, CA 92869
- **Jailhouse**, 2807 Bending Oak Dr., Hampton, VA 23666
- **Johann's Face**, PO Box 479164, Chicago, IL 60647
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- **Nothing But A Nightmare**, 12862 Joy St., Suite D, Garden Grove, CA 92840
- **Nuclear War Now!**, PO Box 7055, Redwood City, CA 94063
- **Overground**, PO Box 1NW, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, NE99 1NW
- **Pee**, PO Box 238, Marden, South Australia 5070
- **Poison City**, PO Box 409, Northcote, VIC, Australia 3070
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ZINE REVIEWS

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ABANDON CITY #1-4,
\$2 or trade, 5 1/2" x 8 1/2", 23 pgs.
A rad DIY comic out of Milwaukee by dudes in bands from there that you've probably heard of. I could swear at least one of them was doing stuff for *Love in the Time of Scabies* as well, but all my shit's a mess right now so I can't check for sure. The story here is about a group of punks who wake up one morning to discover they're the only survivors left in the city. And, of course, what would any punk in Milwaukee do in a situation like that? Get really fucking drunk. It's a cool little punk rock twist on a sci-fi story, though I hope to see the sci-fi elements get played up more. And the art is pretty great. But don't take my word for it! —Joe Evans III (Mark and Steve, 2552 N. Booth St., Milwaukee, WI 53212, myspace.com/dudemancomics)

ASKEW REVIEWS #13, \$3,
8" x 10 1/2", newsprint, 48 pgs.
A zine dedicated to reviews... so what you're reading now is a review of a zine dedicated to reviews. That seems strange, like someone reviewing an episode of *Siskel & Ebert*. Oh well. Once you read it, you realize that the "Reviews" part of the title could probably be dropped, as there is a fair amount of non-review content. But, hey, it's his choice. DVD (lots), comic, and music reviews, and a couple articles, to boot. —Will Kwiatkowski (Askew Reviews, PO Box 684, Hanover MA 02339)

CRACKS IN THE CONCRETE #9, free, trade or donation, quarter-size, photocopied, 38 pgs.
"Inside you will read of: the madness of war, the sham of government, sickening power relations, self-esteem and religion, the case for a revolution and our vision for a truly free society." This, according to the author, is what you will find in here. I, however, only seemed to find half-assed, simplistic essays, the black or white moralistic thought that goes with any true believing "ist," and insulting, condescending down-talking. (For

instance, the author assuming that he has to explain what capitalism is to the reader.) He also assumes the reader is an anarchist (quote: "we [the anarchists]"), so, maybe, he isn't being condescending (since being an anarchist is the sublimest state of being). I'm trying to figure out if I'm more offended by being mistaken for an anarchist or taken for an idiot. Nothing in here is well thought out or even remotely enlightening. Avoid. —Craven Rock (Luke Romano, PO Box 2748, Tucson, AZ 85702)

EAR DAMAGE #32, \$3,
photocopied, 5 1/2" x 8 1/2", 72 pgs.
What separates *Ear Damage* from other similarly themed zines is its quality writing. It hails from Alabama and is primarily a music zine, with some political ramblings about the Obama/McCain election thrown in for good measure. There are reviews, columns, a sad tribute to a deceased member of the local scene, an interview with Electronic Sulking Machine, and an article about rifts between artists and labels. The writing is informal, but compelling. Plus, there are recommendations of Mobile, AL bands that might not make it to readers otherwise. My only gripe is that a zine this short shouldn't review every recent release from each of its advertisers. The layout is pleasant. No one will get eye damage from *Ear Damage*. —Art Ettinger (*Ear Damage*, PO Box 180323, Mobile, AL, myspace.com/eardamage)

FAKE LIFE #8, \$2 or trade,
8 1/2" x 7", photocopied
Fake Life has improved somewhat since the last time I read an issue for review. Standard punk zine fare for the most part, but in this, the first anniversary issue, the topical focus is almost entirely on poop and pooping in an effort "to do something special" for the reader. There's also a good amount of space devoted to other potentially yucky regions of human anatomy in case you get tired of poop. I like *Fake Life*. It's absolutely amateurish in



"Kids writing zines about their local scenes should take note, because these guys are doing it right."

—Lauren Trout
The Rise and the Fall #11

all the best possible ways. —The Lord Kveldulfr (PO Box 1174, Tallahassee, FL 32302-1174)

FEEDBACK, 5 1/2" x 7",
photocopied, 16 pgs.

I just received a zine in the mail in trade for mine. It was all show reviews. I sent my zine back in return, but had to honestly say that I don't like show reviews, so I couldn't get into the zine. However, *Feedback* is an exception to that rule because it's a comic. Yes, all it takes to make show reviews interesting is some illustrations and the text being cut down enough to fit in four panels. But what's harder to pin down is not why I like this zine, but why I like it a lot. There's John's dry sense of humor. Maybe that's it. Or maybe it's the lively, whimsical, unjaded take on things that seems rare for a guy in his thirties. Maybe it's his observant eye, what it takes in, and how it translates to text and illustration. Whatever it is, *Feedback* takes on a mundane topic and transforms it into an immensely readable and over-too-quick zine/comic. —Craven Rock (www.unlay.com)

FISH WITH LEGS #12, \$2,
5 1/2" x 8 1/2", photocopied, 36 pgs.

This issue of *FWL* is all about Eric's being called to do jury duty. Now I can't possibly think of anyone that I'd rather hear a narrative of jury duty more from than this guy. His eccentric, snarky outlook is so fucking hilarious. If you're a zine reader, you should definitely not pass up such an opportunity. There are also some little thoughts on libraries, riding the bus, and the ever-popular "Fun Facts." *FWL* remains somewhere in my top five of current zines going, and my favorite of the funny zine genre. If you like stuff like *Tight Pants*, you'll like this. Actually, those two should have a zine-off. —Craven Rock (Eric Lyden, 224 Moraine St., Brockton, MA 02301-3664, ericfishwithlegs@aol.com)

GLUEWAVE #1, \$2,
5 1/2" x 8 1/2", printed, 24 pgs.

Other than half this issue being coverage of or ads for some band called Blank Dogs, this is a totally random fanzine with bad show reviews and crappy pictures. The music featured in it, however, is really good. Punk-drone L.A.-style, like the times seem to be talking these days. Go Houston. —Andrew Flanagan (Phonographic Arts, 1601 Castle Ct. #6, Houston, TX 77006)

GO METRIC #22, \$4,
8 1/2" x 11", offset, 84 pgs.

This reminds me of *Razorcake*. Rock and punk are at the heart, but there's something more going on. The writers want to share with you something they're stoked on, like the *Kiko* album from Los Lobos, for example. There are articles on the C-86 movement, a track-by-track critique of *The Wrestling Album*, short fiction pieces, and columns. The interview with Mal Sharpe is interesting as well. Plus, how can you not want to read articles like Maddy Tightpants' "Battle Of The Bands" (Shangri-Las vs. The Devil Dogs), or Mike Faloon's "Plastic Man vs. Mr. Fantastic"? —M.Avrg (801 Eagles Ridge Rd., Brewster, NY 10509, gometric.typepad.com)

GO METRIC #22,
8 1/2" x 12", newsprint, 77 pgs.

Go Metric is a really packed zine. There's all kinds of stuff in here. Kickass rock journalism covering one end of rock'n'roll to the other. From Merseybeat to Iron Maiden. From Los Lobos to Maddy Tightpants squaring off the Devil Dogs against the Shangi-La's to see who rocks more (you'll just have to read it). Then there's some fiction, some humor pieces, some comics, a review of pro wrestler rock album, some writing on ziners' obscure pop culture obsessions, and movie reviews. Even the stuff that I didn't like, I liked. —Craven Rock (Go Metric, 801 Eagles Ridge Road, Brewster, NY 10509, gometric@yahoo.com)

JESUS CHRIST SUPER ZINE! #1 \$2, 5 1/2" x 8 1/2", photocopied, 40 pgs. *Jesus Christ Super Zine* would be best described as an ex-evangelical Christian zine. It's the restraint in Ariel's stories of her youth and childhood in the church that makes them so well written. As an ex-Christian, it's clear that she has strong opinions on the subject matter, but she ends the stories without forcing her opinions on anybody; instead letting the stories stand on their own. It also has an interview with her fellow ex-holy roller and childhood friend. It's good stuff as well, along with the snarky summary of the faith called "Instructions for How to Play: Christian." Apparently, there are more of these in the works as well, which

pain, stress, and hardship into some rad comics that—even though are a little tough on the eyes—are extremely relatable. The downside is that, at some points, it becomes so illegible that I can't make out the story line. But I quickly remedy that by making up my own. My favorite part about this is that it is refreshing to see someone tell about all they have gone through but then show that they are still capable of great things. This makes the reading experience even more enjoyable for me on the basis that I feel like I get to know the writer personally just through a stream of four or five comics. —Noah W. K. (754 Washington Ave. 4R, Brooklyn, NY, 11238, Redguard@gmail.com)

NO CONVERSATION #1, stamps or trade, photocopied, 5 1/2" x 8 1/2", 28 pgs.

Stories from Dean's durian-fueled visit to the Indonesian island of Sumatra. The writing's got this academic remove, where he tells you what happened, and lets that paint a picture of the island without editorializing. There is no need to opine when you're describing riding down a bumpy road in the back of a flatbed truck, sitting next to a man who is ashing his cigarette into an open-topped jug of gasoline. You can guess how that feels. This is good writing about fascinating events. —CT Terry (Dean, PO Box 793, Ruidoso, NM 88345-0793)

Underground Railroad to Candyland, and Toys That Kill—to stir up some excitement. Highlights of this issue are the pictures of kids skateboarding at the local park and the interview with The Locust. —Lauren Trout (The Rise and the Fall, PO Box 1794, San Pedro, CA 90733)

SIC BOI #1, photocopied, 5 1/2" x 8 1/2", 12 pgs.

This prisoner zine is not for the faint of heart. Speaking of "faint," the whole thing appears to have been done in pencil, including the cover drawing of a guy with a mohawk spitting on an exploding planet earth. The majority of the zine is an action-packed story about a fistfight with a cellmate, and how that leads into a

"In stories like these we can always see a little of ourselves. And making that connection with other people is one of the main reasons why I read zines."

—Sean Stewart, *Warm Soles*.

I'm pretty stoked about. —Craven Rock (*Jesus Christ Super Zine!* c/o SSO Press, PO Box 2645, Olympia, WA 98507)

MAXIMUM ROCKNRROLL #304, \$4, 8 1/2" x 12", newsprint, 150 pgs. This issue of *MRR* has some band interviews and one with the guy from Government Issue. There are more U.K. anarchist bands covered by Lance Hahn. However, the real reason to get this was the interview with Raymond Pettibon, which was really good! —Craven Rock (*Maximumrocknroll*, PO Box 460760, San Francisco, CA, 94146-0760)

MAXIMUM ROCKNRROLL #305, 306, 307, \$4, 8 1/4" x 10" 3/4", newsprint. Whether or not I always love to read *MRR*, I can say without a doubt that I always love to see it come in the mail. Times are tough and independent printed media is getting hit left and right. Like everyone else, *Maximum* has had to make some changes. But if putting an ad on the back cover, getting rid of the classifieds, and tightening up the content is what it takes to keep the ship moving, then it seems more than worth it. I'm not even gonna describe what this mag is about because if you've never checked one out, then you should probably just do it already. —Daryl (*Maximumrocknroll*, PO Box 460760, SF, CA, 94146-0760)

MENTALLY ILL #1, \$1, 8 1/2" x 5", copied, 8 pgs.

Mentally Ill is a zine put together by a dude who, to put it lightly, has been dumped on one too many times. However, on the bright side, he was able to channel all this frustration,

MISHAP #24, \$2 or trade or free, 5 1/2" x 8 1/2", copied, 36 pgs.

Mishap is a well-rounded zine: a few insightful personal essays, some lists, book and zine reviews, and a tiny bit of fiction. Usually, the first couple of pages of a zine tell me if I will enjoy it or not. In this case, I was hooked after the first page of the first essay, a reasoned look at how we tend to label people by quantitative means before we even have any qualitative experience of them. Ryan effectively mixes personal and political themes throughout his writing, leaving the reader with a snapshot of his ideals, but without the feeling of having been hit over the head with them. I appreciate that. —Sean Stewart (*Mishap*, PO Box 5841, Eugene, OR 97405)

MOUNTZA #3, €5, 8 1/2" x 10 1/2", offset, two-color cover, 100 pgs.

I feel like the winner of some multi-million dollar lottery when I get a copy of *Mountza* for review. This issue retains the high quality production values, and is now perfect bound. Inside are interviews with Criminal Damage, Clorox Girls, Hibernation, Get Rad, Annihilation Time, New Mexican Disaster Squad, Hate Records, and Viral Graphics. Then there are the columns (in Greek), a mix tape article (written in Greek, but band names in English), and entertaining observance of the Neurotic Deathfest from Pascal Cretain, an Anti-Mond tour report, and a new section, "Art & Disorderly." A lot of reading. Opinionated and interesting. —M.Avg (mountza.blogspot.com)

PUBLIC OCCURRENCES #11, \$2 or trade, quarter-size, screened cardstock cover, 16 pgs.

The illustrator who does this zine took an old high school yearbook and drew a bunch of the photos in it. The best thing about it is the cover, which is a thick cardstock with a sweet screen prints on both sides. It looks really nice and really punk. The illustrations inside couldn't be better, thick lines and sort of a... hell, I can't explain it. Illustration/art only zines aren't really my thing. Zines without words tend to end all too quickly for me. I just take a look through them then set them down. Then I always wonder how I was supposed to take it in and if I should have taken more time and pondered over the drawings. That being said, I can definitely appreciate the talent and unique quality of this zine. If this sounds like something you'll like, I trust that you will a whole lot. —Craven Rock (Danny Martin, 746 E. 5th St., Tucson, AZ 85719, bullmooseallstar@yahoo.com)

RISE AND THE FALL, THE #11, \$2 ppd, free in L.A., 5 1/2" x 8 1/2", printed, 56 pgs.

Kids writing zines about their local scenes should take note, because these guys are doing it right. *The Rise and the Fall* sets the bar pretty high for hometown music zines by showing off some excellent graphic design skills from the eye-catching pink and blue cover, to the perfectly reproduced photographs and sharp layout. It doesn't hurt that there are apparently plenty of rad bands active in the San Pedro area right now—including Killer Dreamer,

shitstorm of violence and neglect at the hands of the prison guards. The writing is exciting and in the moment. Randy is looking for pen pals. Hit him up! —CT Terry (Randy Johnson F22545, CC40, PO Box 490, Alturas, CA 96101)

SINKHOLE #14, \$1, photocopied, 8 1/2" x 11", 32 pgs. A kitchen sink Florida zine with columns on The Green Party, Against Me!, roller derby and a political protest, some comics, brief interviews, punk phrases in Spanish ("Please direct me to the nearest tattoo parlor"), and a how-to on sock monkeys. Nice looking cut'n'paste layout and DIY as can be. —CT Terry (Sinkhole, PO. Box 1063, Tallevast, FL 34270)

SOMNAMBULIST #13, \$15 for 4-issue subscription, 5 1/2" x 8 1/2", 40 pgs. This loose zine was done by a woman who had to drop out of art school after being diagnosed with Cushing's disease. There's a great story about her impoverished family having to clear-cut the woods where they lived. There's also some goofy fiction and neat drawings by the editor and one of her friends. I really liked the piece on the family's woods and wish there was more stuff like that in *Somnambulist*. —CT Terry (Martha Grover, PO Box 14871, Portland, OR 97293)

STANDARD ISSUE #4, free (in person, so send stamps or money), 8 1/2" x 11", photocopied, 22 pgs. Scene-based punk zine out of Ottawa, with reviews and interviews of bands from that scene, like The Visitors, Suppositories, and Holy Cobras. Also

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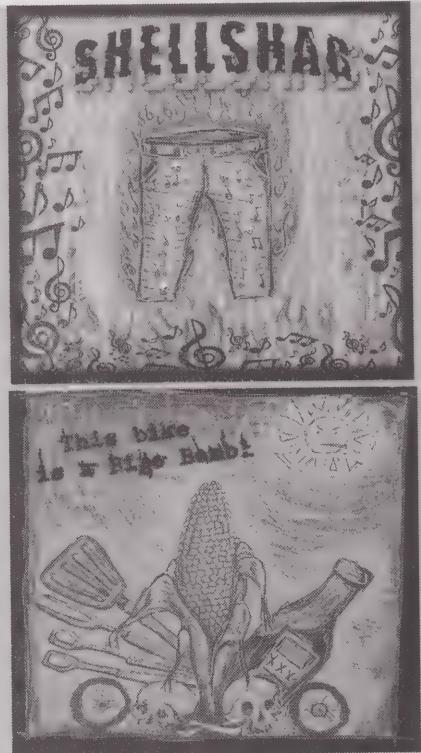
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has some short pieces on quitting smoking, as well as some cool comics and illustrations. Funny and inspired. Made me jealous of their small, tight punk scene. I guess you could say it kind of took me there, meaning it's a well-done zine. —Craven Rock (jensen_ben@hotmail.com)

TEVS #2, \$2, 8½" x 11", copied, 18pgs.

A Minneapolis zine put together by the boys at Eclipse Records and Modern Radio. Most of the pages are put towards long interviews with better-than-average local bands, with two more columns by various contributors. The centerpiece for this issue would have to be "In Praise of the Best Worst Album I Can Think Of" by Chris Besinger, writing about a Suicide record. If anyone knows the MPLS scene and where to dig, it'd be these guys. —Andrew Flanagan (myspace.com/tevszine)

THAT'S COOL, THAT'S TRASH

#1, \$3 ppd. (\$4 w/CD), 8½" x 5½", copied, 38 pgs.

Keen zine with which to clean your ween, mean your gene, and ball your peen! Matt the Cat knows where it's at and that's that, up to bat with shat that puts meat in the seats and feet in the sheets like gum-flappin' 'n' ass-slappin' with the Manikins, Shock, the Road Apples, and Jeff Magnum of

the Dead Boys ("If you hold a guinea pig by the tail, its eyes will fall out. I'm just as surprised as you to read these words"). Photos of girls posing on stacks of Bang and USA Records 45s! Ads for lovelier, fuller bosoms AND Uranium detectors! A cut-price ticket to a world where everybody talks like Snapper Carr, and there are two Midges for every boy! And, to top it all off, a list of the top ten songs about chicken known to man! Go the extra dollar and receive a completely illegally reproduced CD featuring the Hot Chicken 10 and much much more! It's gotta be had, dad! —Rev. Nørø (Matt Mayhem, 112 Hollywood Ave., Oberlin, OH 44074)

TUMS, \$2 or trade, 8½" x 11", photocopied, 36 pgs. Can't say I've ever reviewed a zine of smut. It's pretty interesting. Some of it turned me on and some of it disturbed me. The author says the pieces did the same thing for him/her. The writing was good and had stories covering the sex genres of incest, mature, family friend, and first time. There were a number of graphic drawings and pictures, too. This is totally new to me (a zine of smut, not smut itself), but I liked what I read, although I would definitely need to be somewhat conscious where I read this. —Kurt Morris (PO Box 18051, MPLS, MN 55418)

WARM SOCKS, \$2 or trade, 5½" x 8½", copied, 48 pgs.

Brandt writes an ultra-personal perzine. By that, I mean it's like we have been dropped into his head with no context to guide us. This experience arrives as a mix of typed and handwritten vignettes with collages and other artwork, including a cool hand-drawn map of Brandt's Seattle haunts. There's some angsty unrequited love stuff, some epic friendship stuff, and a hell of a lot of wandering (both physical and mental). I was suspicious at first—sometimes lack of context leads to confusion and frustration when reading personal writing—but Brandt won me over because in stories like these we can always see a little of ourselves. And making that connection with other people is one of the main reasons why I read zines. —Sean Stewart (Brandt Schmitz, PO Box 3984, Berkeley, CA 94703)

ZINE WORLD #26,

\$4, 8½" x 11", copied, 62 pgs.

I'm glad that a resource like this still exists, despite all the pundits chirping that print is dead. Whatthefuckever... As subtitled, this is "A reader's guide to the underground press." The majority of this zine consists of reviews of zines from all over the globe, as well as a directory to zine libraries, classifieds, as well

as columns. I suggest getting this, a stack of notebook paper, envelopes, and a book of stamps and seeing what is out there. —M.Avg (PO Box 330156, Murfreesboro, TN 37133-0156, undergroundpress.org)

ZISK #16, \$2, 8½" x 7"

The first time that I read Zisk three years ago, I wasn't sure how seriously to take it as "the baseball magazine for people who hate baseball magazines." To publishers Faloon and Reynolds, I now say "Mission accomplished!" I like Zisk a whole heap, particularly because it's exactly what it purports itself to be. I hate, hate, hate sports writing about baseball (other than checking how much the Brewers are playing like a bunch of old women of late), and Zisk has actually managed to rekindle my interest in the game through its offbeat articles and often whimsical focus. Note, however, that most of the coverage that I've seen in this rag has been about the National League, so if you've got American League concerns you may be left dripping in the wind. But since I've not read all the back issues, I can't speak to the accuracy of this NL-centric perspective. Check out Zisk, anyway, if you have a modicum of interest in baseball. —The Lord Kveldulfr (801 Eagles Ridge Rd., Brewster, NY 10509)

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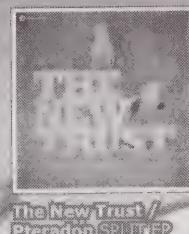
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BOOK REVIEWS



Anthology of Spam Poetry, The

Edited by Morton Hurley, 72 pgs.

This book is actually a bit tricky to review, although I suppose all poetry is somewhat difficult to criticize in any intellectual manner. This anthology, from what I gather, is a collection of the best of the unintelligible drivel found in your everyday electronic junk mail—"spam," if you will. The fact is these writings aren't particularly

This actually makes me laugh, and not just “finger on lips, raised eyebrows, sweater vest, mental tee hee” laugh but “put the book down and laugh” laugh.

unlike even the most revered works of history's "greatest" poets. Had these lines been penned by a tormented literary artiste, tied directly to an instance of lost love or some other travesty, as opposed to being assembled by soulless computing machines, I imagine they'd read quite the same: manic, disjointed, melodramatic, and completely open to interpretation. If the goal of this book is to highlight the subjectivity of poetry as a whole, then it's done a fine job. In that sense, it's almost a mockery, a "culture-jam"-type shot at a literary genre that really doesn't need more mocking. I could be way off, though. Maybe I'm reading way too far into it. Someone could've just put up some money to crank out a book of nonsensical toilet reading—wait a second... maybe the notion of the book itself, the idea of the physical specimen, is as open to interpretation as the words within it! Y'know, maybe it's like, poetry in motion, as they say. I think *The Anthology of Spam Poetry* just blew my mind. —Dave Williams (Vertice 1925, PO Box 890882, Houston, TX 77289-0882)

Bad Habits: A Love Story

By Cristy C. Road, 214 pgs.

This book is not a graphic novel, yet is continually and beautifully illustrated throughout. *Bad Habits* is, at its core, a loosely autobiographical story of trying to find the most important love of all: self-love. The routes the main character, Carmenita, takes throughout the length of the novel are circumlocutious. To me, the problems Carmenita are going to face are as obvious from the first chapter as a wobbly vegetable truck sputtering along in the fast lane in an episode of *CHiPs*. You know that someone's gonna cut that truck off and a watermelon's gonna go through a windshield. It's just a matter of time, even though the driver of the truck is putting down the freeway unawares.

So, let's set very basic terms with *Bad Habits*. Carmenita acknowledges that she's mentally mixed up. She carries the damage of her father and unkind lovers inside of her body like a bag of

knives, blades cutting through. She sets out on the long, hard search for healing. First, she changes her external conditions: moving to a new place, trying on new lovers for size, but even that ground gained seems lost in other discomfort, self-doubts, and self-hatred.

Rule number one, and I say this without judgment: drugs make people less reliable. Sure, in the short term, they can make you feel better, make people funnier, prettier, and more desirable. But, the responses Carmenita has defaulted to—either extreme partying or extreme depression—become predictable, novelistically. Textually, you can see the next hill beyond the next valley. You can see what's coming leagues before Carmenita does. Regardless of the particular situation, in Carmenita's life, everything is beautiful or everything is batter-dipped in shit. Cristy, the author, undeniably, has an eloquent flair for romantic and grotesque language. Yet, when drugs define a part of daily existence—as part of a novel, or in a real life—short-term eloquence almost always starts slipping into a chain of predictably bad decisions that are merely masking some deeper hurt.

No matter the situation—from toilet stall love, to a huge, self-given orgasm, to unrequited love, to a nipple almost being bit off—I kept on waiting for that *CHiPs* watermelon to come through the windshield. That revelatory situation where it's, "Oh, I have to change myself to find the love I'm looking for. Something or someone else just can't give it to me like a present." Here's where I insert a supposition. I have a feeling that this is closely autobiographical and Cristy is telling her own true story and there's no fault in that, but, as a novel, it is a story without closure that is screaming for one. Reading the back cover, it states, "Our heroine learns to leave her bad habits behind and emerge stronger and more independent, clean and open to love." But I read the entire book, and that change—the crux and resolution to this book—is not explicitly written about. It's merely inferred in the last chapter because Carmenita's still alive and, we assume, not doing the exact same things as "that year of malevolent heartache gripping

the limbs of outstanding euphoria." It literally jumps over where the transformation occurs. It's the tension for a crucial resolution that had me reading until the last page, but it wasn't even at the end. *Bad Habits* is a bold, honest book, but one that is incomplete. —Todd (Soft Skull Press, www.softskull.com)

Nothing Nice to Say

By Mitch Clem, 128 pgs.

Mitch Clem has been doing web comics ever since Al Gore invented the internet. Mitch Clem does a very funny comic that's especially sweet for DIY punk rockers called *Nothing Nice to Say*. I don't think that many of the "civilian population" will get all the layers of his jokes. The cover's a perfect example. It's a recreation of Minor Threat's *Salad Days* EP and the human-bear-gopher is wearing a Quincy Punks shirt (those less observant may think it's a Germs' shirt, but would have overlooked the safety pin; those less observant may not know that Quincy Punks is the older aspersion of calling someone a "mall punk."). You don't need to know any of that stuff, but it makes it funnier to me. Mitch Clem is a punk geek. The touchdown his two main characters—Fletcher and Blake—feel for an upcoming Epoxies album is tempered by who's putting it out. Mitch Clem doesn't like bands signing to Fat Wreck Chords. Mitch Clem's publishers—the fine folks at Dark Horse—probably said, "Mitch, we're not going to print the jokes that only ten people will get. Reign that shit in." So, there are no Tiltwheel-as-custard-pies or Bananas (the real progenitors of Bananarchy, not that Raffi schmub) references in here, but there are Avail jokes, Green Day cameos, and plenty of cultural references that folks over twenty-five or with good internet connections and sharp research skills will get, like Punchy the Hawaiian Punch guy making an appearance, a Pac Man ghost bothering folks at a show, or a casual nod to *They Live*. (Rowdy Roddy Piper! Consume!) In sum, Mitch is funny, self-effacing, and spot-on. This shit's rad and it actually makes me laugh, and not just "finger on lips, raised eyebrows, sweater vest, mental tee hee" laugh but "put the book down and laugh" laugh. —Todd (Dark Horse, www.darkhorse.com)

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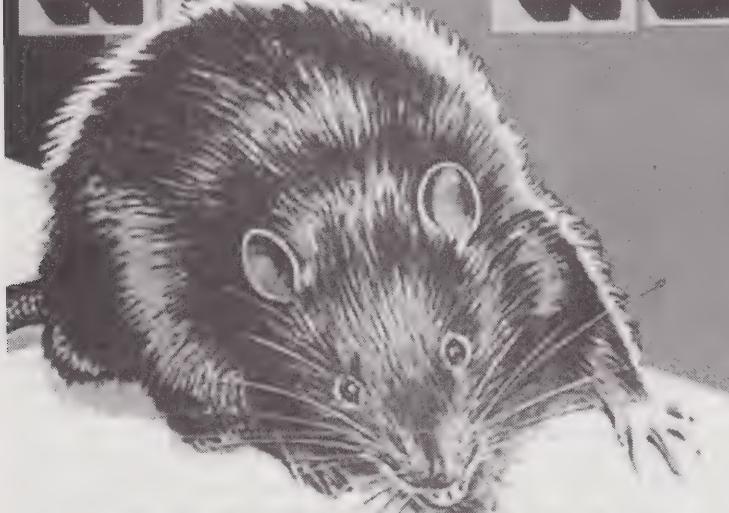


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DVD REVIEWS



The Meatmen: *The Devil's in the Details, Vol. 1: DVD*

If there was a Punk Rock Mount Rushmore featuring the giant busts of the Kings of Tastelessness, right alongside El Duce, GG Allin, and Blag Dahlia would be the leering mug of the "Dutch Hercules," aka: Tesco Vee of the Meatmen. No doubt about it, Butch. (Frank Discussion, Lee Ving, the Angry Samoans, and a few others, of course, deserve to be up there too, but for random and poorly thought out reasons, right now I'm restricting it to the aforementioned four. Besides, I think it's funny imagining the likeness of Mr. Vee eternally carved into a mountainous sandwich of love with the likenesses of Eldon Hoke and Kevin Allin—two competitors in the schlock rock trade for whom he had nothing but stinking heaps of disrespect.)

And what better time than now to have the Evel Knievel of Political Incorrectness come careening in on his satanic superbike, squashing all that is innocuous, fetid and fake beneath his screaming wheels. A world wobbling dangerously out of balance with a tsunami-like influx of new breeds of Instant Celebrities—along with new breeds of dimbulbed gawkers to pay attention to them—is a world in dire need of a quick-draw sacred cow killer with a fast mouth and a high threshold for embarrassment. So when I say that *Devil's in the Details* is something of a Tesco Vee vanity project—or in his own words, an "orgy of one"—that is not in any way to be taken as an indictment or jibe. Our precious World Wide Web—with its Facebooks, Youtubes, Myspaces, and legions of bloggers—has, in many ways, become a piss-filled kiddie pool crawling with horrible little toddlers splashing and screaming for attention—and getting it. And I, for one, have no problem redirecting some of that over-valued attention from the wannabe celebs of cyberspace and "reality" TV to someone like Uncle Tesco. Sure, he might be as much a Dutch Narcissus as a Hercules, but he built his infamy from the bottom up, one scathing insult at a time, using nothing but a wicked wit and a keen eye for soft white underbellies.

That being said, calling this a "Meatmen" DVD is a bit of a misnomer. Here and there, throughout the DVD, The Meatmen are indeed present, performing in their many line-ups that spanned over the 28 years since their inception, as is Tesco's other band the Hate Police. But playing behind the spastic Mr. Vee in murky clips culled from old VHS tapes, they're little more than the house band in this feature. The various Meatmen band members come across as little more than anonymous cogs in the flamboyant Tesco Vee Entertainment Machine, much in the same way as the various Joe Lunchboxes who showed up to play behind GG in the Murder Junkies all those years (brother Merle being the notable exception.)

So while you do get to feast your eyes and ears on plenty of Meatmen live footage—rough as it may be—the bulk of this three hour Tesco Extravaganza is a masturbatory montage of mean spirited cartoons, vintage toy commercials, serial killer puppet shows, and countless skewerings of various pop culture icons. But what this DVD delivers most of all is seemingly every scrap of video that ever captured Mr. Vee's likeness. That includes *Way USA*—Uncle Tesco's seamy little runt

of a travelogue show that lived a very quirky but short life on MTV back in the late 80s. Also included is a ripping good parody of a VH1 *Behind the Music* documentary, featuring the life and times of Mr. Vee, naturally. And, of course, throughout the DVD the Meatman's testicular fixation with ABBA's Agnetha Faltskog crops up again and again, in various lowbrow vignettes. The only more frequent theme is Tesco's obsession with that "Satan" character from *The Bible*. The whole tired Beelzebubba thing is somewhat lost on me, but Tesco obviously feels that it "still has legs," as they say, and that it still has the power to make morally upright Bible Belters wet the bed. And he's the Master, so I'll assume he knows what he's doing.

As amusing as most of this smutty smorgasbord is, I still have to say that *Devil's in the Details* has more filler than a vat of Alpo. Keeping in mind the verity of the old saying "one man's trash is another man's treasure," I nevertheless contend that this thing could've been trimmed down by 20% or so. While I found, for example, the tour of his kitschy toy collection to be very interesting, too many spots in the DVD seemed to be filled with random "out-take" type material that was a bit snooze-inducing.

What was interesting to watch was the evolution of Tesco from a snide, kinetic almost frat-boy-looking asshole in the early 80s to the slightly calmer middle age asshole we have now—still full of piss and vinegar, as he's quick to add. But if anyone can pull off "punk" and "avuncular" at the same time, it's Tesco Vee. In the words of the Rotters' Phester Swollen "the whole idea of middle age punks is offensive....but that's the point." And I'll drink to that. It's entirely possible that a 50-something Tesco Vee can jerk people's chains even better than the youthful Tesco who wrote "Tooling for Anus" and "Cripple Children Suck" all those years ago.

Among the many things that are made clear by watching *DITD*, is that Tesco Vee is the Bozo Satirist Laureate of not just the world of punk, but the world of pop culture in general. And even after a 10 year hiatus, his agitator/shit-stirrer/entertainer skills are still in top notch form—so much so that it would be a crying shame if he didn't somehow wind up with his own "T. Vee" show again. Twisted talent like his doesn't come down the pike all that often. And maybe Triumph the Insult Comic Dog could be his sidekick. The only question would be whether the current crop of dough-heads that make up the MySpace generation would have the neuron power to sense that, underneath all debauchery and homo jokes, Tesco might just be putting us all on—*maybe*.

But most surprising about this DVD—next to the fact that there is very little nudity here—might be the fact that the Clown Prince of Libertinism—Mr. Evil Incarnate himself—actually comes across as a pretty damn likable guy. Imagine that.

If you like your punk rock served up with a strong shot of gravitas, then you might be better off passing on this video and looking for something by some stodgy, self-righteous straight edge band. This is *not* for uptight weenbags with no taste for lowbrow humor. But if you like things crass and/or juvenile, you're in luck. In fact, might I be so bold as to suggest that all the covers of this DVD have a warning sticker that reads "*Devil's in the Details* is Pee-Wee's Playhouse for perverts." I think that more or less sums it up. —Aphid Peewit (MVD Visual, PO Box 280, Oaks, PA 19456)

Shelter: *A Squatumentary*: DVD

Among the many ludicrous ideas that society has tried to shove down my throat and make me buy into is the concept of "ownership." Yes, you read that right. *Ownership*. The soft gooey chocolaty center to "being an American" that makes all that we do make sense. It's the thing that is in the sticky middle of all advertising and it's the sick marshmallow clown tumor that is at the very heart of the "American Dream."

It's also the thing that, next to our stunning good looks, supposedly makes us superior to all those languishing third world countries where the dearth of Ipods and cell phones and lavish Martha Stewart-like houses is pathetically counterbalanced by an overabundance of rickety shacks, teeming flies and malnutrition. Those people are just not clued into the potential spiritual glories of gluttonous ownership, according to a sweetly ass-stupid ex-worker of mine. We're smart enough to own as much as we possibly can and they're not, simple as that. Just ask that Rush Limbaugh bag of gas.

Whether you fancy yourself on the right side of the political spectrum or

the left, in this "land of the free, home of the brave," the sense of ownership is one of our most primary motivators for pulling ourselves out of bed in the morning and we oftentimes use it as a gauge to see how our fellow humans measure up. It's such an integral component of our consensus reality that we're barely aware of just how pervasive it is. That can be explained, of course, by the fact that we've all been manipulated and dumbed-down to the point where it now seems unnatural to question that which fuels our most basic motivations. But all along the desire to "own" has been the rotten hairy butt carrot that's been dangled in front of our noses and it's kept us slugging along, forever grasping, forever wanting.

One of the more notable consequences of that is that our land is carved up into units of ownership called "properties," and the phantasm of ownership is further propped up by a leviathan of a legal system that keeps an ever watchful eye out for those who might not play by the game rules. But it all has as much "solid" reality as, for example, Malcolm McLaren's fanciful, revisionist take on the history of the Sex Pistols. Put butt-simple: it's a classic case of reification. It's the attempted concretizing of pure abstractions. In reality, ownership is nothing more than a figment of a giant imagination.

Now, saying this might possibly be the most dangerous thing an American can say these days, seeing how our entire economic system is kept uncomfortably sustained by the dutiful ingestion of the bland and unintelligent fruits of ovine consumerism. And consumerism is, of course, tied into the whole ownership concept like stink on shit. Shooting my mouth off like this could very well get me assassinated even before Barack Obama. But here's the naked truth: the concept of ownership is an infantile, brutish, and territorial idea that surely grew from a sprout that twisted up from between the midget hemispheres of the legume-sized brain that we, as hominids, possessed in the darkest of ages of our early evolution. It all boils down to the idea of "mine"—that grabbing, covetous concept that showed up for most of us right around the same time that we were wearing diapers and hanging out in playpens and routinely throwing temper tantrums when we weren't able to seize the object of our desire and make it our own.

To this day, the idea of ownership still sticks in my craw and simply refuses to be digested. I guess it's a lot like that Olean shit that they

tried putting in snack chips in the 90s—as much as you ate it, it just kept sliding through your tubes and out your back hole without leaving behind so much as a nutritional skid mark. The concept of ownership has similarly refused to stick to me. So it was with some interest that I popped *Shelter* into the DVD player. I had a feeling of prescience, a distinct sense that I was about to gaze into a crystal ball of sorts and see what my future might hold for me. I have, after all, always admired people who thumbed their noses at society's restrictive conventions and found their own shelter outside the delineations of the law. Whether it's Diogenes living in a large deserted tub or Taoist hermits living in mountain caves or Richard Proenneke chucking everything and building himself a cabin deep in the Alaskan wilderness, I have always been impressed by their free-thinking gumption.

Shelter is a 45 minute documentary that shines an honest light under the rocks and into the darkest corners of modern day urban decay. Three California squats—Hilarity, Banana House, and Power Machine—are featured and at each we get to see how the outlaw inhabitants go about their day-to-day, mundane existence. That ranges from dealing with rigidly doctrinaire law enforcement thugs, to dealing with plants growing up through the kitchen floor, to fortifying their squats against intruders by spreading shards of broken glass along the windowsills. And what comes shining through is that these are not shabby miscreants, societal dregs, or diseased rodent people, but intelligent, idealistic folks who are brave enough to buck the system and live by their own rules. And I admire the stinking hell out of that.

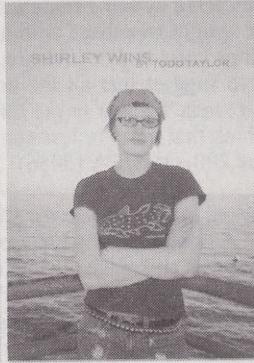
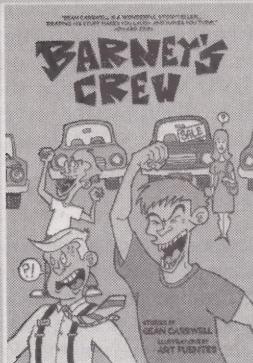
As someone who has an intrinsic inability to take the concept of ownership too seriously—and as our economy currently shudders and strains in what might be the earliest stages of birthing the Second Great Depression—I'm realizing that the noble art and science of squatting is one that I should probably familiarize myself with. And if you're like me, someone who has never squatted but is intrigued by the outlaw glamour of it, *Shelter* is as good a place to start your investigation as any. Filmmaker Hannah Dobbs has said that she hoped that *Shelter* would get people to think about squatting and I would say that in that respect this film is an unalloyed success.

—Aphid Peevit (hannah.e.dobbs@gmail.com)

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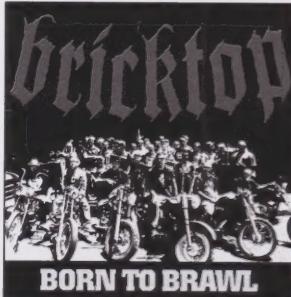
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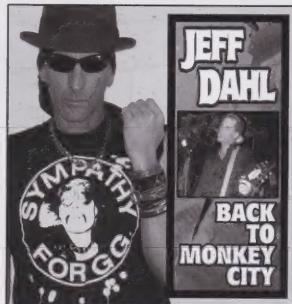
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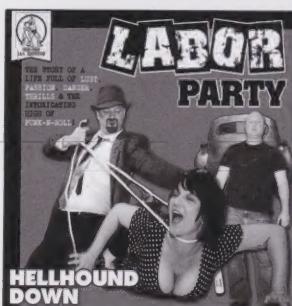
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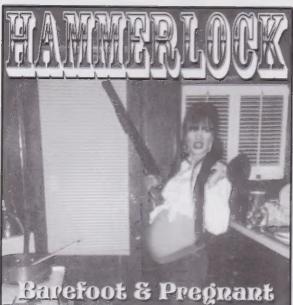
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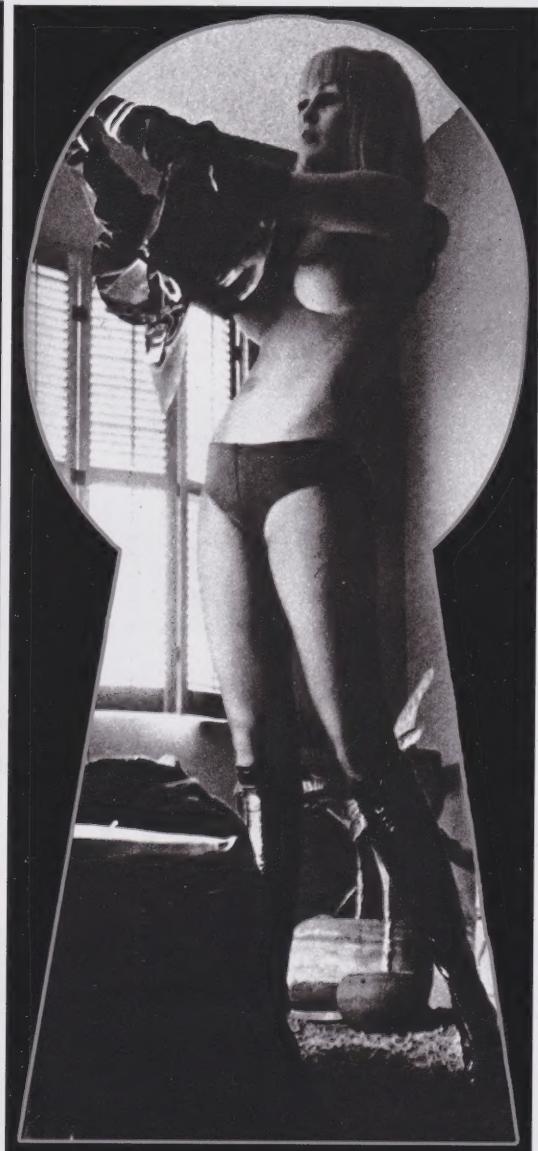
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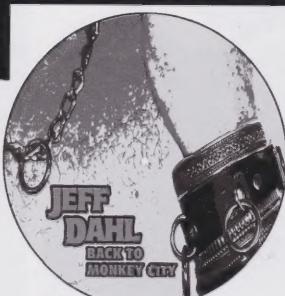
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